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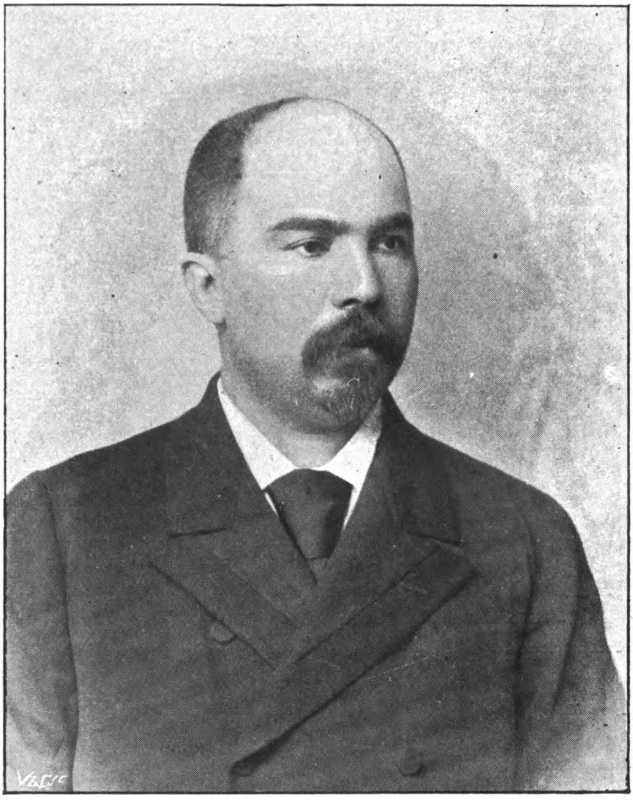

M. STAMBULOFF.

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M. STAMBULOFF

3-2962

By
A. HULME BEAMAN

WITH SIX PORTRAITS

LONDON
BLISS, SANDS AND FOSTER
CRAVEN STREET, STRAND
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INTRODUCTORY.

THE life of M. Stambuloff is so intimately connected with the national life of Bulgaria, that a biography of that Statesman becomes almost a history of the birth and growth of the Principality. A full and complete history of Bulgaria is, however, beyond the scope of the present sketch, and I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to give special prominence to those periods in which M. Stambuloff played a leading part, filling in the remaining details sufficiently to enable the reader to follow the story intelligently.

Making M. Stambuloff the centre figure, I have devoted my efforts to presenting a faithful picture of the man and of his deeds, and it may perhaps seem that due importance has scarcely been given to the *rôles* of other actors. It would, however, be impracticable to enter into analyses of the actions, characters, and motives of all the leading men who are mentioned as colleagues or adversaries of M. Stambuloff. To do so would be to write several volumes the size of this little

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work. Those who wish to learn more of the diplomatic history of the Union with Eastern Roumelia, or of the abduction of Prince Alexander, may read it in the voluminous Blue Books presented to Parliament. Major von Huhn's account of the Bulgaro-Servian War is worth perusal by military students, and gives a lively idea of the general state of affairs at that critical period in the existence of Bulgaria. I have purposely avoided incorporating in the biography matter which has already been published, and can be read elsewhere.

The story, as it is told in these pages, has been almost entirely taken by word of mouth from the lips of those who were, and are, principally concerned. I have known personally and more or less intimately for many years M. Stambuloff, M. Zankoff, M. Grékoff, M. Karavéloff, M. Petkoff, and all the other leading politicians and officers. If the view taken should appear too strongly biassed in favour of M. Stambuloff and his policy, it must be remembered that I have watched the development of Bulgaria under that policy, and have seen the inauguration of the new one. It is not so much that I approve M. Stambuloff, as that I condemn his successors and their methods. By the time the reader has reached the end of this book I venture to think that he will agree with me in what I have striven to make an impartial estimate of the relative merits and responsibilities of M. Stambuloff and his opponents.

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Before entering upon the tale of M. Stambuloff's chequered experiences, I should like to present him to the public as he sits in his rocking chair. He lives in a small and modest house on the outskirts of the town, at the end of Rakovsky Street, under the shadow of Mount Vitosh. The visitor, on ringing, is inspected through the glass pane of the door by the faithful Guntcho, and if the reconnaissance is satisfactory, is ushered into the hall. On the right-hand side is the drawing-room, and on the left the study. It is here that you will find the ex-Premier.

The room is meagrely furnished. Over the door is a panoramic view of Sofia. On the top of the bookcase sits a huge stuffed horned owl. Over another bookcase stands the bust of Prince Alexander,—"the only souvenir I ever received from the Prince"—and a pile of bound volumes of the newspaper *Svoboda*. Hanging on the wall is an oil-painting which looks almost black, with curious flecks of light about it. If you inspect it you will see that it represents the assassination of M. Beltcheff, and the bright spots are the flashes of revolvers and the faces of the murdered Minister and of M. Stambuloff. On the further side of the room, one corner is taken up by a writing-table littered over with papers, proofs of his journal—the *Svoboda*—private letters, and bills. The telephone stands handy alongside a copying press, and a travelling clock and calendar mark the flight of hours and

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days. Next the table and facing the door is a window, under which is a stand-up desk, whilst in the other corner is a Chatwood safe. The fourth side of the room looks through two large windows on to the street, and under them runs a long deal table covered with green baize. Between the windows a stuffed capercaillie, from Samakov, looks down over the table, which is strewn with more proof-sheets and papers. Pens and ink are there, and a set of tobacco-jars, ash-trays, cigar-boxes, and cutters, made out of segments of shells at Krupp's great factory. "That is my *pot-de-vin* from Krupp, on an order for over two million francs," he will remark, laughingly. There is nothing else in the room to note, except it be the portrait of Prince Ferdinand, over the smaller writing table, and a portrait of himself, by a local artist, over the safe. Leaning against the bookcase are two or three repeating rifles, with fixed bayonets; and in the middle of the apartment, seated in a bent-wood rocking chair, is M. Stambuloff himself. His portrait, on the frontispiece, gives some idea of his face, but it fails entirely to reproduce the character of the eyes and mouth. Looking at the photograph you see a somewhat heavy, sleepy-looking countenance, giving no indication of the restless energy and indomitable spirit of the man. In repose these are not so very marked, but as soon as he touches upon a subject of interest, M. Stambuloff's whole mien changes. The heavy brows arch or contract, and the drooping lids

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lift under the scorching flash of his eyes, which glow like live coals. The thick full lips form themselves into kindly smiles or sarcastic twists with equal facility, and now and again they draw back into a grim thinness in front of the white teeth, whilst the close-cropped hair bristles and stands stiff over the massive forehead. You would scarcely recognise, in such moments, the M. Stambuloff of the frontispiece. In stature he is short and thick-set, and in spite of continued bad health, and a ceaseless hacking cough, which scarcely gives him a moment's respite, he holds himself erect, and walks with a firm decided tread. His early life of hardship in the open air has toughened his frame, and his fondness for outdoor exercise, particularly for shooting, has probably enabled him to withstand hitherto the attacks of insidious diseases, aggravated by the intense mental strain which he has undergone.

When I visited him, in the month of May, I found him much changed from the M. Stambuloff with whom I used to tramp the Sofia marshes and plains, after snipe and quail. The once black beard and hair were plentifully sprinkled with grey, and the erst smooth skin was pencilled deep with crows' feet. There was also an unhealthy pallor instead of the old ruddiness, and always the recurrent cough. Nevertheless, his spirits were wonderful, and if the scabbard shows signs of wear, the blade is as keen and as sharp as ever.

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In the following pages the English reader will be able to follow the Bulgarian statesman from the beginning of his career up to the present, which is scarcely likely to be the end of it, if his life be spared.* I have introduced him to the public in due form, and trust that the acquaintance will be an interesting one.

CONSTANTINOPLE,
June 30th, 1895.

* *Vide* Postscript, p. 234.

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M. STAMBULOFF

CHAPTER I.

YOUNG DAYS.

Stambuloff's family—He is apprenticed to a tailor—Joins the Tirnovo revolutionary committee—Goes to Odessa as scholar of the Empress—Studies for the Priesthood—Is ejected from the University—Returns to Bulgaria—Travels as a pedlar—Forms revolutionary committees—Attempts to raise revolt at Esky Zagra—Is hunted out of Bulgaria—Starvation at Bucharest—Second attempt at revolt—Benkovsky at Panagurishté—Christo Karamenko the Voivode—An adventurous drive—The siege of Drénovo Monastery—Stambuloff crosses the Danube under sentry fire disguised as a gardener—Joins the Russian staff during the Servian War—The Russo-Turkish War.

ON the northern slope of the Balkans, some twenty kilometres from the Hain Pass, lies the town of Tirnovo. At the time of the Turkish domination it was little more than a big village, but it has since risen to the position of a thriving town. It was there that Stepan Stambuloff was born on the 31st January, 1854. His father kept a small hotel, and earned a scanty, but honest, livelihood, sufficient to keep and, in a measure, to educate his three children. M. Stambuloff's brother has never left Tirnovo, nor mixed in any way in the strife of parties. Devoting himself to business he has amassed a small fortune, and continues to live the retiring life of a well-to-do merchant. His sister married Major, afterwards General, Mutkûroff, of whom more will be heard later on.

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Stepan was sent at an early age to the communal school, and remained there until 1868, when it was closed by Midhat Pasha, who, under his new scheme, was planning the absorption of all Bulgarian schools by those of the Turkish system. By this measure young Stambuloff was thrown upon his father's hands, who, unwilling to keep him idle at home, apprenticed him to a tailor. The first seeds of revolt had, however, already been sown in his mind. Amongst the visitors to the hotel was a certain Captain Nicola, of Silistria, who was secretly plotting an insurrection against the Turkish authorities.

This adventurer succeeded in collecting a band of desperate men, and crossed the Balkans by the Shipka Pass. He was, however, met at Gabrovo by the Turks, and killed, whilst his band was dispersed. M. Stambuloff's father was arrested on a charge of complicity, and of harbouring the rebel, but for want of proofs was released, having, as a matter of fact, had nothing whatever to do with the plot.

Meanwhile, Stambuloff was only working in a very half-hearted fashion at his board. The master tailor, after the habit of his kind, was fond of the bottle, and day after day would close his establishment by the simple device of folding-to the double shutter, which opened on to the street, and betake himself to the beer-house. His apprentice profited by these holidays to pursue his studies. As the school was no longer in existence, he frequented a M. Shishmânoff, a master who had arrived with a great reputation fresh from Paris. This man preached the solid advantages of learning, and of a good education, with such eloquence that Stambuloff resolved definitely

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to abandon tailoring and place himself under his tuition. Shishmânoff also persuaded Midhat Pasha to allow him to open a temporary school until the new scheme should be in working order, and obtained even a subsidy of 10,000 piastres to start with. His father was at first inclined to resent young Stambuloff's desertion from trade, and threatened to turn him out of doors if he left the tailor, but finally he consented, and gave in to the already masterful will of his son.

In 1866, the Cretan insurrection broke out, and greatly moved the restless spirits in Bulgaria. Many went over and joined the Cretans, whilst other leaders commenced organising bands in Roumania, who were to cross the frontier, and fall upon the Turks when the proper moment arrived. Unfortunately for themselves they appear to have had very mistaken ideas of their opportunities, and almost invariably met with prompt defeat and execution by the Turks. In 1867, a Philip Totiú led in a band, which was annihilated by the troops, and the prisoners, together with the gory heads of the slain, were brought into Tirnovo. In 1868 a larger band of about 150 men, under Hadji Dmitri and Karâdja, crossed the Danube near Sistov, and advanced upon Tirnovo, where they encountered the Turks. The result was seen next morning in a row of thirty trunkless heads arranged in line over the portals of the Konak. These and similar occurrences fairly fired the indignation of young Stambuloff, who swore an oath that he would never rest until he had freed his nation from the rule of the Ottoman Porte. A first revolutionary committee was formed in Tirnovo itself, under the direction of a bookbinder, and

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by affiliating himself Stambuloff took his initial step in rebellion. They were, however, as yet, too weak and too inexperienced to do much, and contented themselves with holding private meetings, and elaborating great plans for the future. It was about this time, in 1869, that Shishmânoff's school subsidy was cut off, and he continued merely to give lessons privately in his own house to the most assiduous and devoted of his pupils.

Needless to say that Stambuloff was found among the still faithful, and when the yearly examination was held, he was one of the leading scholars. As fate would have it, the Dragoman of the Russian Consulate at Varna, a M. Nicola Daskaloff, happened to be in Tirnovo at the time of the examination, and by invitation was present. The sight of him inspired Stambuloff and a few of his comrades with a bold idea, and the young Bulgarians waited to see the Russian Dragoman, and diffidently put forward a query if it would not be possible for them to obtain a better education in Russia than was possible under the Turks? M. Daskaloff encouraged them in their hopes, and bade them draw up a petition to be forwarded to the Asiatic Department of St. Petersburg. This was in the month of June, 1869, and in the autumn of 1870, to their inexpressible delight, the petitioners received an answer to the effect that they were admitted to the Odessa University, as scholars on the Foundation of the Empress of Russia. The two years spent in Odessa only served to increase the determination and the capacities of the Bulgarian students for the task they had set before them. Stambuloff spent his probation in studying for the priesthood, but the unruly bent of his

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nature found far more congenial converse in the society of the Nihilists than in that of his spiritual teachers. At that period the Odessa University was a perfect hotbed of Nihilism, and, out of 200 scholars, there were perhaps not more than thirty or forty free from the taint. All the Bulgarians, panting for freedom, and intoxicated with the breadth and grandeur of the new ideas, threw themselves into the arms of the Russian Nihilists. Stambuloff, at the age of eighteen, was elected librarian of the party, whose President was Kovalsky, afterwards killed in a revolt. They met in cellars, and all manner of precautions were taken, but they failed to escape the infallible eye and the merciless hand of the Secret Police. A sudden raid was made upon the University, and the Nihilists were arrested *en bloc*. Short work was made of the Russians, and the Bulgarians, as Turkish subjects, were given twenty-four hours in which to quit Russian soil. Stambuloff was despatched to Galatz, on the Danube, from whence he continued his journey to Bucharest. There he found the headquarters of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Party, with a strong Central Committee under Luben Karavéloff (uncle of the famous Minister) and Boteff. He at once entered into the closest relations with them, and stated his readiness to act under their orders. Accordingly he was sent back again to Bulgaria, where he was as yet unsuspected; the news of his Odessa escapades and of his Bucharest intrigues not having reached his native town. Returning with all the prestige of the Odessa University about him, he was offered by the Turks a post as schoolmaster, at a hundred liras a year, but he declined to hamper himself

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with any fixed occupation, and commenced without delay to re-unite the fragments of the revolutionary faction, which had been very roughly treated by the Turks during his absence. The two leaders had both come to untimely ends. Vassili Levsky, whose statue now stands in Sofia, at the head of the street named after him, had finally been caught by the Turks and hanged outside the present capital. He had succeeded for many months in evading pursuit, and in inflicting considerable annoyance and loss upon the Turks, and when at length he was captured there was despair in the hearts of the outlaws.* Angel Kontcheff, another resolute rebel, had put an end to himself, at Rustchuk, to avoid falling into the clutches of his enemies, and so many failures, punished with such swift and inexorable severity, had broken the courage of the patriots. It was indeed almost equivalent to certain death to be caught conspiring or in arms against the Porte, and Stambuloff found himself at first almost alone. After a short search, though, he discovered, at Tirnovo, Pope Mattei, a priest who had been intimate with all Levsky's plans and system of propaganda, and who was able to give the emissary from Bucharest much valuable information as to the districts where he would still find relics of Levsky's Sub-Committees, and men

* Levsky's memory is always revered as one of the heroes of the first stage in Bulgaria's struggle for independence, and in many a peasant's cottage is to be seen a quaint coloured engraving of the patriot-martyr standing upon a barrel under a gibbet, whilst two Turks astride on the cross-beam are adjusting the cord round his neck; a priest stands on one side, and a soldier with fixed bayonet on the other. In the background is Mount Vitosh, and underneath an inscription, *Vassili Levsky. Hanged at Sofia, 6th Feb. 1873.*

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devoted to the cause. Stambuloff, armed with the authority of the Central Committee, instantly set about re-constituting and re-organizing the old Sub-Committees, and forming new ones. He started on his mission on foot, but at the village of Belocherkovo the party presented him with a fine Arab horse. In order to avert suspicion from the real objects of his wanderings he pretended to be a book-pedlar, and having purchased a pair of saddle-bags, and filled them with popular literature, he applied for and obtained a licence as a hawker. He then made an extensive tour, beginning at Sivlivo. From thence he went to Lovtcha, where he found a valuable ally in the person of M. Lukânoff (now awaiting his trial at Sofia on an accusation of torturing the Beltcheff murderers). From Lovtcha to Philippopolis, and Tatar Bazardjik, back to Philippopolis, and so to Kezanlik, Gabrovo, Drenovo, and back to Tirnovo. At all these places he exhibited his mandate from Bucharest, formed Sub-Committees, who gave him full powers to represent them at headquarters, and in the course of six weeks he had under his supervision about forty of these secret societies. With their professions of adherence in his pockets, Stambuloff returned to Roumania, and gave an account of the success of his mission as far as it went. It was decided to do nothing rashly, but to prepare to strike at the first favourable opportunity. The Central Committee gave Stambuloff practically unlimited authority, and sent him back to Bulgaria, at the age of twenty, as their representative. Before starting, he purchased forty revolvers, and instructed a candle-seller named Goroff to smuggle them across the Danube at Giurgevo. Owing to the

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weight of his parcels, however, Goroff was detected, and foolishly confessed that the revolvers belonged to a certain Stambuloff, of Tirnovo. This *contretemps* made it impossible for the young leader to enter Tirnovo openly. Consequently he crossed the Balkans to Esky Zagra, and procured a passport for himself as a native of that town. After spending a few days there he proceeded to Hermanly, where he found Radi Ivânoff (now occupying a high position in Sofia) as station-master, and Zachary Stoyânoff as pointsman.

The Turks had meanwhile traced Stambuloff's entry into Bulgaria, and were searching for him very actively. He was forced, therefore, to lie hidden at Hermanly, living under a woodstack for most of a month, and protected by his two friends. The story of this period of the struggles of the rebels for independence is charmingly told by Zachary Stoyânoff, in his book of reminiscences. The friendship between him and Stambuloff never cooled to the day of his death, and he was one of the most active colleagues in the movement from that day onward. When the coast was clear, Stambuloff passed on to Adrianople, where he stayed at the house of another conspirator, Ikonômoff, who facilitated his passage to Constantinople. On reaching the capital, he went up to Buyukdereh, and was presented to General Ignatieff, the Russian Ambassador, by Christo, the well-known Cavass of the Sofia Palace to-day. General Ignatieff received him well, encouraged him to persevere, and sent him on to Odessa with a Russian passport. It is worthy of remark that, after having been expelled from Russia as a Nihilist and a Turkish subject, he should have been

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able, two years later, to re-enter the empire with a Russian passport delivered to him by the Ambassador.

Without delaying in Odessa, he hurried on to Bucharest, to report himself to his chiefs. It was in 1875 that he entered Bucharest for the second time. There he found that a split had taken place at the top of the tree. Luben Karavéloff, with the older members, was for a Fabian policy, whilst Boteff, with the younger and more ardent spirits, was for a vigorous pushing of the "committee" system, to be followed by immediate action. It is easy to guess with which side young Stambuloff threw in his lot, and he founded a revolutionary newspaper, together with Boteff, called the *Znameh*, or *Standard*. He also toured through Roumania, recruiting for the cause, when the insurrection broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This aroused the wildest hopes amongst the Bulgarian revolutionaries, who resolved not to let slip so good a chance. The choice of an emissary, who should have the whole management and responsibility of the campaign, fell at once upon young Stambuloff. He was given full powers, and told to pick out a favourable spot, where the flag of revolt might be unfurled. He chose Esky Zagra, and started for Galatz, where, through the influence of the committee, he obtained a French passport, and embarked on an Austrian-Lloyd boat for Constantinople. On board the same steamer were Benkovsky and Stoyan Zaimoff, with whom Stambuloff conceived the audacious plan of his rising.* He left

* Another version is that the plan, including the burning of Constantinople, emanated from the Central Bucharest Committee, and that Stambuloff was merely commissioned to execute it.

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them behind at Constantinople, with instructions that as soon as the insurrection broke out at Esky Zagra, they were to set fire to Stamboul. They actually made considerable preparations to this end, but the course of events hindered them from putting their scheme into action.

Meanwhile Stambuloff went by train to Tirnovo-Semen, and thence on foot to Esky Zagra, which place he reached in the late autumn, in September. On arriving, he sent word to his trusty lieutenants, Zachary Stoyânoff and Radi Ivânoff, to join him from Hermanly. The reports sent in from the various committees represented five thousand men as being ready to rise, and from Tirnovo alone two thousand were promised over and above the first total. Out of these supposed seven thousand, Stambuloff reckoned upon at least one thousand answering the summons, and with that thousand he was prepared to run the risk. He saw, though, that there was not by any means the enthusiasm he would have liked to meet with, and that however patriotic his countrymen might be at heart, the terror of the Turk was heavy upon their arms and feet. Having come to Esky Zagra to raise a revolt, it was not in Stambuloff's nature to be discouraged from making the attempt. The night of the 6th/18th September was fixed, and the places of rendezvous were two cemeteries on the outskirts of the town—Shadir Moghileh and the Latin Cemetery. The plan was, that the assembled conspirators were to attack and burn the town of Esky Zagra. Stambuloff, then twenty-one years of age, led a little band of thirty armed men out to Shadir Moghileh at sundown, and there they waited the arrival of the

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hundreds and the thousands who had sworn to support them. The night was dark and stormy, and the thirty waited through its long hours till dawn began to break. The bitter truth was then evident: they were betrayed, and could not return to Esky Zagra. Their only resource was hiding and flight. They retired to a small forest a few miles out of town, where they rested during the 7th. The Turkish soldiery, however, were on the trail, and they fled to the village of Hain, from whence, on the third day, they crossed the Hain Pass of the Balkans—all that was left of them, for several had fallen on the way.* The weather was intensely cold, and they soon fell short of provisions. They were only saved from starvation by hunting down a small herd of roe-deer in the soft snow. They dared not shoot, and had to run them to a standstill. After enduring almost intolerable hardships for ten or twelve days, they decided to disperse and make the best of their way, each wherever he pleased.

The last night was a melancholy one for Stepan Stambuloff. Although it was against the rules, they had lighted a fire to keep warm, caring little in their wretchedness what fate might befall them. Most of his comrades blamed him for precipitating matters, and for striking before the hour was ripe. Seated on a carpet of *zdravitza* (a sort of heather) by the dying embers, amidst the dreary waste of snow, he pondered over

* Two brothers had taken refuge in a cottage, which was surrounded by the Turks. When all their ammunition was exhausted, the younger brother wished to surrender, but the elder stabbed him to the heart, and then set fire to the room, and perished in the flames.

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his past life, so short and yet so filled with stirring memories, and he himself told me that it was then that he had his first disillusion, and shed his first tears over the faithlessness of his men and the frailty of their promises. He went further, and swore deeply to himself that never more would he expose his life for the sake of a nation who deserted him in his hour of need. How often he broke that oath history tells; indeed, by next morning he had regained some of his old confidence. As the sun rose it looked on a pitiful spectacle. The faithful few, without money, food, or refuge, were met probably for the last time. They piled their rifles and their flag, the flag of so many hopes, in a cave, and rolled a stone to the mouth of it. Then they re-swore their vows, and with prayers on their lips, and despair in their hearts, the Bulgarian patriots wrung hands, and at the Lâzofsky Pass went silently each his own way.

Stambuloff made for Tirnovo, where, to his infinite astonishment, he found everything quiet, and the Turkish authorities ignorant even of the futile attempt at Esky Zagra. From Tirnovo he went to Sistov, where he was hospitably received by a Madame Zenoff, whose brother-in-law took him across the Danube, and he landed for the third time in Roumania. His reception, however, was a cruel one in Bucharest. His failure was imputed to him as the worst of crimes, and he was practically outlawed by his compatriots. When he sat down to a table the rest would rise and leave it, and he was made to drink the uttermost dregs of the bitterness of defeat. Having next to no money with him, he was soon brought to the verge of actual starvation. He was saved, however, by the

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advent of a friend, who brought him a hundred liras; but when these were spent, he was again for three days without food of any sort. At last a compatriot had pity on him, and sent him to Giurgevo, with a present of ten francs. At Giurgevo, he put up at a house named "La Caserne," and by degrees he got together about fifty kindred souls. He now began, at last, to receive money and help from Bulgaria, and the tide seemed to be turning. At "La Caserne" the irreclaimable conspirator sketched out a new scheme. For revolutionary purposes he divided the whole of Bulgaria into four districts, *Tirnovo, Slivno, Vratza and Sofia*, and *Tatar Bazardjik with Philippopolis*, and the environs.

The Feast of Sts. Cyril and Method, the 11th of May, was the day fixed for the rising. On the 6th February Stambuloff crossed the Danube once more, but this time it was not an easy task. He was condemned to death for the Esky Zagra episode, and his portrait and description was in the hands of every Turkish post. Furthermore, the Danube was beginning to break up, and the floes were beginning to drift under nearly a foot of water over their surfaces. It was, however, necessary to get into Bulgaria, and it would be almost impossible to do so later, in a boat. The desperate attempt was made on the evening of the sixth,* as I have said. Stambuloff, with his friend,

* I was frequently surprised, in enquiring various details from M. Stambuloff, at the extraordinary accuracy of his memory, especially for dates, which I invariably found to be correct in comparison with documents, Blue Books, etc. On my expressing curiosity as to how he could recollect such a date as this, he replied that there "are some dates which last as long as memory itself. The date of a day or night, when you expected every

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the Voivode Christo Karamenko, were dressed as Turkish gardeners, with the usual broad red sashes. Unwinding these, and knotting them together, they tied one end to the guide in front, and the other to the waist of the Voivode, Stambuloff being placed in the middle. The water was bitterly, icily cold, and the passage hazardous in the extreme; but the adventurous trio effected it safely in about an hour. On the opposite bank they were met by the Dragoman of the Russian Consulate, who conveyed them, in a cart, to the house of a fine old lady, known as Baba Tonka Obre't'ena'a, both of whose sons joined the rebels, and paid the usual price later on.*

After a day or two at Rustchuk, Stambuloff decided to go to Tirnovo, taking Christo Karamenko with him. They first thought of riding, but finally preferred the "Shirket," a sort of local post service. The journey was a very risky one, as both of the travellers were pretty well known, but they disguised themselves, and bought a cask of brandy to "make the horses go faster," by intoxicating the driver. Karamenko feigned illness, and wrapped himself up in bundles of shawls, and Stambuloff pretended to be his nephew. They reckoned on reaching Tirnovo in nine hours, and set off at nightfall. The brandy, unfortunately, was too strong, or the driver's head too weak, and after going a few miles he rolled off his

moment to be your last, is not easily effaced. And the joy of escaping from some imminent deadly peril is to me incomparable to any ordinary sweet or delight. I have had that joy several times, but I never felt it more keenly than when I left the ice for dry land that night."

* A third son, M. Kola Obretenoff, is now Prefect of Rustchuk.

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box into the mud; Stambuloff then had to take the reins. Anybody who has tried to drive Balkan ponies knows how loth they are to obey an unfamiliar hand, and this obstinacy on the part of the horses, joined to ignorance of the road, so delayed the refugees that it took them twelve hours to reach Biela, which was only half-way. Not without difficulty they managed to elude the police, who would inevitably have recognised Karamenko, had they not been persuaded to refrain from disturbing the slumbers of a sick man, and taking fresh horses and another driver they continued their route, reaching the outskirts of Tirnovo about three o'clock the following afternoon. As they dared not enter the town, they astonished the "Shirket" coachman by saying that they would go to the Monastery, which stood hard by, in order to obtain the necessary care and comforts for the invalid. Luckily for them his suspicions were not aroused, and he allowed them to leave unmolested. The fugitives made for the forests which surround Tirnovo, and there they stayed for two days, entering the town themselves by night, and being visited during the day by their partisans. Amongst these was Benkovsky, who, upon the failure of the Esky Zagra plot, had come on from Constantinople. He had already assumed rather a leading position, and begged Stambuloff to use him as an "Apostle"—the title given to the revolutionaries in whom the chiefs reposed their confidence, and vested in a large measure their authority. At first Stambuloff hesitated, as he knew comparatively little of Benkovsky, but yielding to his solicitations, he sent the new man to Panagurishté. There Benkovsky soon proved himself

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superior in resource and energy to all the others put together.*

The conspirators still adhered to the original date of the 11th May, fixed at Rustchuk, and Gorni Orékhovitsa, a few kilometres from Tirnovo, was pitched upon as the headquarters for the Central Committee for all Bulgaria. Orékhovitsa was occupied by Stambuloff, with about two thousand men in the village, and lurking amongst the forests in the neighbourhood, but the Turks got wind of something unusual, and marched four battalions of troops through Orékhovitsa and on to Sistov. The sight of the soldiery took half the courage out of the rebels, and, whilst they were hesitating, news reached them that Benkovsky had been forced by the Turks to defend himself at Panagurishté, and thus for the second time the revolt had begun before preparations were completed. Most conflicting rumours came from Benkovsky's district, but it was clear that there was no longer any possibility of delaying the movement. Christo Karamenko advanced upon the Monastery of Drénovo, which he took and fortified, and Stambuloff was marching to join him when he met the Turks in force laying siege to Christo. He therefore retreated for a few miles to

* Amongst the Volunteers was a certain Slavkoff, who was nearly seven feet high, and big in proportion. Stambuloff refused to enrol him, saying that he was too conspicuous, and if once he were suspected he would be too easy to trace, besides compromising others. Nevertheless, Slavkoff continued to mix in the intrigues, and as Stambuloff would not keep him at Tirnovo, he went to the Vratza district. Here he was promptly arrested as soon as he arrived, which undoubtedly saved his life, as he had not yet had time to commit any very serious offence.

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watch the progress of events. On the night of the 1st May, a terrific snow and hail storm came on, accompanied with thunder and lightning. Under cover of the elements, Karamenko, with his two hundred, made a sortie, and, with fifty of his men, cut his way through the Turks, and effected a junction with Stambuloff, leaving one hundred and fifty dead behind. The skulls of these desperate rebels may be seen to-day in the Monastery of Drénovo. Shortly after this, Stambuloff's scouts arrested five men armed with rifles, who declared that they were the relics of the Panagurishté band. They presented a pitiful appearance, being mere skin and bone, and in the last stage of exhaustion. They said that it was on the 20th April that they were attacked by the Turks, that they had fought for four days, but in the end were utterly routed and cut down. Benkovsky himself had been caught by the troops at Ichtiman, and shot. His two lieutenants, Voloff and Ikonomoff, had actually reached the Danube, when the pursuit drew so close that they were compelled to jump into a half-rotten boat, which foundered in the middle of the swollen stream, and they were both drowned. *

Thus the next venture of the patriots had met with no better luck than the first one; indeed, the consequences were more disastrous. The Turkish authorities were now

* For further details of the guerilla warfare carried on by Stambuloff and Zachary Stoyânoff, who were the popular leaders from the commencement, the student should refer to the latter's volumes of memoirs, which are as full of dramatic interest as any work of fiction.

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thoroughly on the alert, and determined to put down the slightest revolutionary movement most mercilessly. The Bulgarians themselves were discouraged, and would no longer shelter the refugees, and the patriots repeatedly found themselves betrayed by their own countrymen. Zachary Stoyânoff, in his account of these times, declares that in no single instance was one of the outlaws betrayed to the police or to the troops by a Turk, though they were often obliged to have recourse to Mussulman peasants for food and shelter. On the contrary, the Turk, if forced to do so, would provide as best he could for his guests, but would generally refuse payment for service unwillingly rendered, and scorned to betray them; whereas it is sad to relate that cases were not few in which Bulgarians gave the information which led to seizure and death.

It would be superfluous to enlarge upon this period of Bulgarian history. Enough has been said to show the leading part already taken, at the early age of twenty-one, by Stambuloff, whose imperious spirit and indomitable courage and energy seem to have marked him from the first as the natural champion of Bulgarian independence. The extraordinary influence and power of command over the most unruly material which he has shown throughout his career first manifested itself in his contests with the Turks. Often thrown over by his self-elected chiefs, abandoned by his subordinates, and with apparently not a vestige of hope left to him, he never wavered in his purpose, but pursued his ends with the persistency and patience of a sleuth-hound.

The situation in which he now found himself was

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one of the most critical in his life. For the moment there was nothing more to be done in Bulgaria, and he cast about him for the means of escaping with his head on his shoulders. After several adventures he reached Sistov, on the Danube. There he noticed Turkish sentries every hundred yards or so along the shores. Choosing the best spot he could, he arranged for a boat with four rowers to come over from the Roumanian side and fetch him. The stroke oar was to have a white handkerchief bound round his fez. The refugees—there were four of them, dressed as Turks—lounged about in eager expectation of the arrival of the boat. The shades of night were already falling before it stole out into mid-stream, and it was not until it was within a few yards that the white handkerchief was distinguishable. Till then the refugees had not dared to make a move towards the water's edge. They now tumbled helter-skelter over the bows in spite of the shouts of the Turkish picket, and bending to the oars, the crew were soon well on their way back, when the sentries opened fire upon them. In the uncertain light, however, no harm was done, and for the fourth time Stambuloff reached the hospitable soil of Roumania.

In Bucharest he found the greatest excitement aroused by the outbreak of the Turko-Servian War. Volunteers were flocking in to the Servian camp, and Stambuloff at once enlisted as Secretary to General Kishevsky, in which capacity he saw some of the fighting of that brief campaign.

Amongst other projects, was one for an attack on

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Tultcha, at the mouth of the Danube. The Russian Government were to furnish four ships for the Bulgarian refugees to man, and the Russian Generals, Fadèëff and Kishevsky, were to have commanded. Stambuloff went to Odessa to arrange for this mad scheme with General Gortchakoff, the Commandant of the town, and he agreed to give the steamers. The Emperor Alexander II., however, nipped their hopes in the bud, by telling his two Generals that it was no business of theirs to lead such an expedition, which was nothing more than taking lambs to slaughter, and was sure to end in disaster.

The Servian War was shortly followed by the Russo-Turkish War.

The Bulgarians formed two Committees at Bucharest—the Old Committee under Georgieff, and the New Committee under Kyriak (the uncle of Dragan) Zankoff. This Young Committee, on which sat Stambuloff, issued a circular, enjoining upon all members and *affiliés* of sub-committees to disband and enlist forthwith in the Russian contingent for Bulgarian emigrants, which was being formed at Ploeshty. This circular, for which Stambuloff was held responsible, nearly led to a rupture between him and General Skobéleff, owing to a distorted German translation of it, which was printed by the Old Committee. The general result was that all the old system of Committees, which had cost so much labour and bloodshed, was broken up, and the band were amalgamated as volunteers in the Russian Army. It must not however be forgotten that it was through them that the attention of Europe was first called to the condition of the Christian population of Bulgaria, and the massacres

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which led to the war were the vengeance of Turkey on the Committees and their helpers.*

* The massacres of Batak were probably no worse than those which took place at Panagurishté, Tatar Bazardjik, and elsewhere, but the village being out of the way, perhaps less pains were taken to conceal the corpses and other traces. At Batak the insurgents had been induced to come in by a promise of pardon, and were then put to the sword. When the Turkish High Commissioner arrived, and saw what had happened, he remarked to Tussoon Bey, "How much has Russia paid you for this work? Do you know that this is the beginning of the end of the Ottoman Empire?"

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CHAPTER II.

ENTRANCE UPON PUBLIC LIFE.

Stambuloff is elected Deputy for Tirnovo—Begins organising revolutionary bands in Macedonia—His opinion of the Macedonians—The First and Second Chambers—Election of Prince Alexander—Stambuloff sets up in practice as a lawyer—Four Cabinets in one year—Zankoff as Premier, and Stambuloff Vice-President of the Chamber—Zankoff falls by Russian intrigues—The Septennate—M. Hitrovo and the Liberals—Stambuloff's telegram to Hitrovo—Zankoff turns his coat and becomes Russophil—Russian proposals to M. Stambuloff to get rid of the Prince—Stambuloff in bed and his visitors—Machiavelli on revolutions—The state of affairs in Eastern Roumelia.

IN the preceding short review of the troublous times which paved the way for Bulgarian independence, the leading part played by Stambuloff and his immediate friends and followers stands out in bold relief.

The revolt at Esky Zagra in 1875, at Tirnovo, at Panagurishté, and finally that at Koprishtitza, which provoked the massacres, were all the work of the Young Bulgarian Party, acting entirely upon their own initiative and responsibility. The popular idea, that the Party was encouraged morally and supported financially by Russia, is a mistaken one. Up to the commencement of the Servian War, the Bulgarians had not received one copeck from Russia. Their Committees and their Bands were formed and maintained out of their own resources, and the successive revolts were planned and raised without the knowledge of Russia.

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Later on it is true that the Slav Committees in Petersburg, Moscow, and Odessa, seeing their opportunity, assisted the struggling patriots very heartily, but it was not until the hand of the Russian Government had been forced by the clamour of Europe, and especially by the cry raised by English philanthropists in London.

I will pass briefly over the war, whose incidents have been often and well described elsewhere. As is known to every schoolboy, it terminated by the appearance of the British Fleet before the Dardanelles, and the signature of the Treaty of San Stefano, by which instrument Eastern Roumelia was treated as an integral part of Bulgaria; and naturally Stambuloff was elected deputy for his native town of Tirnovo. The Roumelians, overjoyed at their new-found liberty, got up an address to the Emperor of Russia, expressing their unbounded gratitude for their deliverance; and Stambuloff, with some of his fellow-deputies, was chosen to convey this giant address, to which were appended more than 250,000 signatures from every town and village in Bulgaria and Macedonia, through Adrianople to San Stefano.

Before they reached the camp, however, they received the news that the Treaty had been denounced, and that a Conference had been summoned to meet in Berlin. The Conference resulted in the celebrated Treaty which left Macedonia and Roumelia under Turkish rule. This, as may be imagined, was a crushing and cruel blow to the hopes of the unhappy inhabitants, many of whom declared that they would never again submit to the dominion of the Crescent.

Amongst the most active malcontents Stambuloff

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quickly took a foremost position, and began his old system of forming Committees, a business in which he was now proficient beyond rivalry. He directed his attention principally to Macedonia, and after a few months spent as a schoolmaster, he was chosen by a number of Committees to go into Macedonia as their representative. This was in November, 1878.

Just within the borders of that province he established a species of small duchy, or kingdom, where he reigned in conjunction with the Metropolitan Michael (who is at the present moment Bishop of Philippopolis), and they never tired of organizing and sending out armed bands to overrun the country. But the Turkish gendarmerie and regulars slowly and relentlessly exterminated one band after another, and a great discontent arose, much of which was directed against Stambuloff himself. He also grew to dislike the Macedonians on account of their treachery, and want of any real sense of patriotism and honour, never feeling sure when he lay down at night whether he would rise next morning, and being aware that almost any Macedonian, if he found the chance, would murder him in order to secure the reward on his head. This life could not last very long, and though in after years Stambuloff worked hard for Macedonia, he always retained a strong contempt and antipathy for the people of whom he had had so unpleasant an experience. He was delighted to be recalled in the early summer of 1879 to take his seat in the Chamber which was meeting at Tirnovo, one of its main objects being to protest against the Treaty of Berlin.

This Chamber consisted of two classes of Deputies, the

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one chosen by the people, the other nominated by Prince Dondukoff Korsâkoff, the Russian High Commissioner. He was then busy in drawing up the Bulgarian Constitution, but he refused to permit Deputies from Roumelia or Macedonia to have any voice in the matter, and this first Chamber was really nothing more than a fiction. It was quickly dissolved in favour of a second one, which unanimously elected Prince Alexander of Battenberg as Prince of Bulgaria, and decreed the elections for the Legislative Chamber. During this short year of 1879 Bulgaria was born again, and endowed with all the institutions of a full-fledged State, without having in reality any men with the slightest knowledge or experience for the posts they were called upon to fill. The Turkish Mehkemehs, or Courts, were abolished, and a new set of Tribunals established with a new Code, based, it is true, upon the old Ottoman one, and judges and lawyers sprang into existence with no qualifications beyond inborn sharpness. This was Stambuloff's opportunity. Having a ready tongue and a wide popularity, he at once began to practise as a lawyer. During the elections many of his friends fell into trouble for disturbing the peace, and he offered to defend them before the Tribunals. He met with great success, and decided to follow seriously a profession which promised to be extremely lucrative. Setting up at Tirnovo, his practice soon extended, and from that date until he assumed the Regency he was known as the cleverest and most acute lawyer in Bulgaria. This did not prevent him from taking part in political life, but for several years he kept comparatively quiet, and simply occupied his place as Deputy for

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Tirnovo. There were already two distinct parties in Bulgaria, the Liberals and Conservatives, the former being especially a Bulgarian or Patriotic Party, and the latter very Russian in its proclivities. It is needless to say that Stambuloff belonged to the Liberals.

Prince Alexander having come to Bulgaria as a Russian nominee, enjoying the full favour and confidence of the Czar, very naturally chose his first Cabinet from the Conservatives. M. Bourmoff was elected Premier, with MM. Natchévitch and Grékoff as Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Interior. Under this Cabinet the first elections for the Legislative Chamber were held quite freely, without force or pressure being brought to bear upon the electors. The result was that, out of one hundred and sixty seats, the Liberals gained one hundred and thirty, and their first motion in the Chamber was one of want of confidence. They also, however, committed the mistake of angering the Prince by addressing him in their answer to the Speech from the Throne, as Serene Highness instead of Royal Highness, and he, being thoroughly disgusted with the whole Chamber, immediately dissolved it. At the same time he changed his Ministry and formed a new Cabinet, with the Metropolitan Clement as Premier. It may seem strange to our notions that in the present century a prelate should be a Prime Minister under a Constitutional *régime*, but in Bulgaria, from first to last, the clergy were active factors in politics, and Clement was more of a statesman than a priest. His sympathies then were and have always remained with the Russians, and the choice of the Prince was a perfectly legitimate one. MM. Grékoff and

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THE COUNTESS HARTENAU
(Widow of the late Prince Alexander).

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THE LATE PRINCE ALEXANDER.

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Natchévitch remained, as did also General Barantzoff, the Russian Minister of War. The second elections were held, but they resulted in an even greater majority for the Liberals, and unless the Constitution was to become a dead letter, it was necessary to listen to the voice of the nation, and form a Liberal Ministry. With great reluctance, Prince Alexander found himself forced to call upon Dragan Zankoff, then a prominent Liberal and Russophobe, to construct the Cabinet. The second Legislative Chamber, convoked in the spring of 1880, elected Stambuloff as Vice-President. As may easily be imagined, the Prince and the Russian Party were at continual strife with the Minister and the Chamber, and feelings ran high. Stambuloff seems, nevertheless, to have managed at this period to preserve in a large degree the friendship and confidence of both sides. It was on the advent of the Liberals to power that the hopes of Eastern Roumelia were raised again, and deputations began to flock in, begging Bulgaria to accept a union. In support of their request, they affirmed that they were ready to furnish from fifty to a hundred thousand armed fighting men, the rifles being provided from the stock given by General Skobéleff to his so-called Gymnastic Societies.*

As Stambuloff was considered by far the best authority on such subjects, Prince Alexander sent for him, and asked for his advice. I note this because the question

* These societies were established all over Eastern Roumelia by General Skobéleff for the purpose of drill and general instruction in military service, and a large consignment of arms, the exact quantity of which was never accurately known, was presented by him to the Societies.

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has often been raised of how far the Prince was cognizant of the Roumelian movement, and it is clear that he knew of its existence even from the first. Stambuloff, with the bitter experience of the past still fresh in his memory, declared that he must go to the spot and convince himself of the actual state of preparation for such a step, before he would venture to give an opinion. Accordingly he and M. Givkoff (since Minister of Finance at Sofia) were sent by the Prince as Bulgarian delegates to a mass meeting held at Slivno by the agitators for a Union. What they saw there, however, did not satisfy them that the plot was ripe, and they returned to report in that sense, in consequence of which the matter dropped for the moment, as far as Sofia was concerned.

The Government meanwhile was being carried on in a quarrelsome manner. General Barantzoff had been replaced by General Ernroth as War Minister, and the latter was in open disagreement with his Premier, Zankoff. There were many radical reasons for this, but the overt pretext was a question concerning the Danube Commission. The Bulgarians had sent a delegate, and Dragan Zankoff, in the presence of General Ernroth, informed the Austrian Minister that he had instructed his delegate to work in harmony with and support his colleague from Vienna. Events proved either that no such instructions had ever been given, or that the Bulgarian delegate snapped his fingers at them, as he systematically opposed the Austrian. General Ernroth and the Austrian Minister thereupon accused Zankoff of bad faith, and used their influence with Prince Alexander so successfully that Zankoff was driven out of office, and

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the Premiership was given to Karavéloff, this being the fourth Cabinet formed in the course of one year. At this period Zankoff was a rabid Russophobe, and it was now that he made his famous declaration that he wanted "neither Russia's honey, nor her sting."

In the beginning of 1881 Prince Alexander had estranged the sympathies of the Bulgarians to an alarming degree, by his open dislike of the Liberal or National Party. In fact so far had he gone in expressing his mistrust and contempt of those who were undoubtedly the representatives of the popular will at that time, that it was evidently impossible for them to work together. He saw all the faults of the Liberals and judged them by too high a standard, according to which they fell lamentably short of his ideal of statesmen. His fancy was that he was far better able to govern Bulgaria by himself than any of the comparatively untutored Deputies and Ministers who were perpetually putting stumbling-blocks in his way. Accordingly he decided at one fell swoop to do away with the Opposition, and in conjunction with MM. Stoïloff and Natchévitch he planned the *Coup d'état* of the 27th April, 1881, by which he suspended the Constitution, turned out the Ministry, and named the Russian, General Ernroth, as his Premier. Arrangements were made for a Great Sobranje, or National Assembly, which, upon meeting, was to approve and confirm the election of Alexander as Prince of Bulgaria, and to confer upon him the power of governing irresponsibly by himself for the space of seven years. This project met with a stubborn resistance from the Liberals, but the elections were no longer free. At every electoral urn was stationed a

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Russian Commissary—an officer in uniform, who interrogated each elector with the query, "*Are you for the Prince, or against him?*" He then examined the bulletin, and, if unfavourable, tore it up, and substituted one bearing the name of the Government candidate. These officers were styled popularly "Kniajevsky Kommissâry," or, "The Commissioners of the Prince." Just before the elections Prince Alexander made an electoral tour in company with M. Hitrovo, the Russian Minister, and in its course he frequently passed under arches inscribed, "Long live the Constitution," which he was suspending, and received hundreds of petitions against his project, but he refused to entertain any opposition. There were only three towns in which the "Commissary" failed in his mission. At Plevna he was beaten, and narrowly escaped being burnt alive; at Nikopolis he was thrown into the Danube, and at Tirnovo he was compelled to look quietly on at the election of the Opposition candidate. The result was, that of the Liberals, only Slaveykoff, Karavéloff, Sarâpoff, and Zankoff were elected, these being the only candidates freely balloted for. The result may be foreseen. The National Assembly, packed with nominees elected by force, met at Sistoff, and in July, 1881, passed the project of the Septennate in less than ten minutes, without opposition.

The Prince had refused to visit Tirnovo on his tour, and so M. Hitrovo came alone to that town. On reaching his quarters he summoned all the notables, and enquired of them their reasons for opposing the seven-years' project. In the name of them all, Stambuloff

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answered that they feared the Prince would scarcely govern as well as his more experienced Ministers, and also that they were not without doubts as to the treatment he might be keeping in store for the Liberals. To this M. Hitrovo answered, "You need not be afraid, for it is not the Prince who will govern, but I, and you know that the Russians are friends to the Liberals"

Stambuloff retorted, "If the Prince chafes under the will of a whole nation, how do you expect he will obey your single dictation?"

To which M. Hitrovo, scowling, answered, "Young man, you speak too freely."

Again Stambuloff declared that as M. Hitrovo had asked them a plain question they had given him the plainest of answers, but that if he did not wish to hear them they had better leave, which they did; with a Parthian shaft from Stambuloff as the door closed, "Time will show whether I am right."*

However, the Septennate having been voted, Prince Alexander found himself, as he fondly hoped, a free, not to say autocratic, ruler in his adopted country. His first act was to hold some private little elections for a "Small Assembly" of forty members, whose sole duty and *raison d'être* was to be the voting of the Budget. He also named a Council of State for elaborating Laws and Reforms, in the place of his old obstreperous Chamber, but I cannot

* A year later M. Hitrovo quarrelled with the Prince, and left Bulgaria. As he reached the frontier a telegram was handed to him from Stambuloff which read us follows: "*Gelaiyim Vam schastlivoie pût: spomnite nash razgavor fe Tirnove: otchen skoro opravdalsa.*" "A pleasant voyage to you. Remember our talk at Tirnovo: it has come true pretty quickly."

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find that its labours ever produced anything lasting. On the other hand, the whole of Bulgaria began to seethe and boil under the surface, and not liking the aspect of affairs, the Prince applied to Russia to send him two Generals "to uphold his prestige," which just then was at a dangerously low ebb. The Czar, Alexander III., answered this appeal by despatching General Soboleff to act as Minister-President and of the Interior, and General Kaulbars for War, adding also General Tioharoff as Minister of Justice. The Prince and Bulgaria were thus furnished and saddled with a thoroughly Russian administration, and Alexander was not long in finding out that even the Liberals were less objectionable. The Russian Ministers bluntly declared that they received their orders only from the Czar, whereas, as a matter of fact, they took no orders from anybody, but acted just as they pleased. One thing they soon made plain, namely, that they did not mean to take any orders from the Prince, and a silent but bitter struggle soon began between him and them. Knowing the enmity of the Liberals towards Alexander the Russian Ministers tried to enter into negotiations with Stambuloff, who was now the acknowledged chief of his party, to get rid of him. Stambuloff, however, declined to enter into their plans, saying that though the Prince had committed a grave error, not to call it by a harsher name, in suspending the Constitution, his departure would leave Bulgaria a mere province of Russia, which was the last thing the Liberals desired, or would tolerate. Being repulsed in this quarter, the Russians turned to the army, but Stambuloff was forehand with them, and prevailed upon most of the

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young Bulgarian officers secretly to swear that they would punish any attempt to tamper with the regiments, by killing their foreign superiors. He also took care that this should be known to the Ministry, who temporarily ceased their intrigue in consequence. None the less they continued the high-handed method of government they had established, almost ignoring the authority of the Prince, who daily was made to feel that his power was diminishing. He had abolished the Constitution in order to govern by himself, instead of which he had merely transferred the reins from the National Party to a clique of St. Petersburg officers, and his endeavours to have a voice in the direction of the State were met by threats of dethronement. He was not one, however, tamely to submit to such treatment, and a breach was soon opened between him and his Imperial patron the Czar, who looked with the greatest disfavour upon his ambitions after thorough independence. This breach was never closed but went on widening from this date until the abdication.

It was when smarting under the revelation of Russian treachery that Prince Alexander was induced to promise a restoration of the Constitution. This was effected unostentatiously by the Little Chamber quietly voting an address begging him to return to the old order of things. The Prince consented on the spot, and signed the proclamation without the Ministry having an inkling of what was going on. When they were apprised of it they resigned *en masse*, in a white rage, to the infinite delight of the Prince and the general satisfaction of the nation. Dragan Zankoff was elected Premier, and General Cantacuzene took the place of General Kaulbars as

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Minister of War. The elections brought in another Liberal majority, but a split arose in the Party on the question of the Presidency of the Chamber. Zankoff wished Stambuloff to have the place, but a large section were in favour of Karavéloff. The Chamber was convoked in 1884, at Tirnovo, and Stambuloff, who did not wish to be a cause of strife, contrived to reconcile Zankoff and Karavéloff, who were old private enemies. The reconciliation, unfortunately, was short-lived, and before the day fixed for the election of the President they had quarrelled again. The election resulted in the victory of Karavéloff, upon which Zankoff at once handed in his resignation. Stambuloff used every effort to persuade him to remain at his post, pointing out the bad effect on the Party his defection would produce, but it was of no avail. Karavéloff was called by the Prince to form a Cabinet, and Stambuloff was elected President of the Chamber without a contest. The result of this incident was that Zankoff, from hatred of Karavéloff, joined the Opposition, and the Opposition threw itself into the arms of Russia. Up to then Zankoff had been the greatest of Russophobes, but he now turned into a Russophil. The rôle played by Zankoff in the history of Bulgaria, is one of many sides, but he seldom possessed any great weight or influence. The Bulgarians like his simple homely ways and speech, but he has always proved himself to be a self-seeker, and was never really respected. His Russophilism arose, not from conviction, but because, having no hopes from the Government, he was obliged to accept Russian roubles to keep himself from want. Taking their wages, he did his best to serve them, but it must not be thought that he

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was ever actuated by any fixed political idea, or by any other motive than that of earning his living in the best way he could. He was much encouraged by M. Koyander, who had replaced M. Hitrovo as Russian Political Agent, and a regular Russian party was now formed, both in the Chamber and throughout the country. The year 1884 passed without any incidents of importance, but it was nearly fatal to Stambuloff. On the occasion of the opening of the Chamber he caught cold, and for four or five months lay at death's door in the Hotel Bulgarie, in Sofia, which stands opposite the Palace. Amongst his visitors, one day, came Prince Alexander. They had never yet met on friendly terms, and the Prince probably thought this a good opportunity of making his peace with the turbulent Liberal leader. In the kindliest manner, he enquired after Stambuloff's health, asked him if he might send him delicacies, fruit, and old wine from his cellars, and if he wished any of his expenses defrayed during his illness. The stubborn nature of the sick man, however, revolted even against such royal advances, and he answered that he had money enough of his own to pay for all he needed, both tone and word being almost insulting. The Prince flushed scarlet with vexation, and, turning on his heel, left the room without a word. On re-entering his palace, he was heard to remark, "Should it please God to take to Himself any of my Bulgarian subjects, He might choose my President, who never does me aught but ill." * In telling me this

* Eight or nine years afterwards, when he was at Gratz, Prince Alexander related this story, with the remark that it was curious that he should have prayed God to take the man who, two years later, was destined to restore his throne to him.

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anecdote Stambuloff said that his own conduct was quite inexcusable, but that, at that period, the Prince was not yet fully converted from Russophilism. "I did not like him myself," said he, "but I supported him from beginning to end, because I saw that his personal beauty and chivalrous character were qualities likely to win the hearts of the Bulgarians, and that when we should be able to gain him over to us, he would be a famous leader for our nation." During the winter of 1884 Stambuloff lay ill, but in the spring of 1885 he felt somewhat better. One morning, M. Koyander, accompanied by Prince Cantacuzene, came to see him. After the usual polite enquiries they remarked, "We have heard from St. Petersburg that Prince Alexander is trying to negotiate a marriage with the Princess Victoria, daughter of the Empress Frederick. Our Government cannot permit this match, and has charged us to tell both you and M. Karavéloff that the Prince must be got rid of before he can ally himself with the German family regnant."

Stambuloff was lying in bed reading Machiavelli's *Commentaries on Livy*, and, curiously enough, just as his visitors entered he had fallen upon the passage where it is said that one or two out of every hundred revolutions may be expected to succeed. Turning on his side, he answered that he was not well enough to decide such a matter then, but, *primâ facie*, it appeared to him that the Russian Government was wrong to object to a marriage which would lend to the Prince the additional support of Germany. From the Bulgarian point of view, on the contrary, it was highly desirable, and he honestly told

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them that he was delighted at the news which afflicted them. "I may add, gentlemen, that I shall report your proposal to the Prince; and perhaps you will allow me to read you a few lines of Machiavelli, appropriate to the occasion." After he had done so, Stambuloff concluded, "I have planned and headed three revolutions, all of which came to nothing, and I am not at all anxious to begin another. Good morning, gentlemen."

As may be guessed, this was the last visit paid by M. Koyander to the invalid, who at once sent for Karavéloff, told him what the Russians had said, and charged him to inform Prince Alexander, whose sentiments towards his former friends were not improved by learning their persistent endeavours to get rid of him.

As soon as Stambuloff was able to move he went to his native town of Tirnovo, where he remained up to the outbreak of the Roumelian revolution.

Before entering upon a consideration of this movement, which changed the whole political face of the Balkan Peninsula, and whose effects are not yet complete, it may be worth while, in as few words as possible, to sketch the situation in Eastern Roumelia before the outbreak.

The first Governor-General appointed under the Organic Statute, was Aleko Pasha, who was friendly to the Liberals or Nationalist Party. His method of government, however, did not please Russia, who succeeded in obtaining his dismissal and the appointment of their own candidate, M. Chrestovitch, or Gavril Pasha, as he was usually called, who had been Secretary-General to Aleko Pasha. With the turn of the tide, the Liberal element was promptly swept out of every post of importance, and the Russian

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faction carefully eliminated every man who fell under suspicion of not being a cordial Slavophil. This naturally led to a very bitter feeling, and no secret whatever was made of a plot being on foot to turn out M. Chrestovitch and his Russian clique. The difficulty was to find a watchword. That of the union of the two Bulgarias had always been a favourite one, but if anything it belonged rather to the Russians, as the Liberals had feared to use it too freely on account of the danger of thereby offending the susceptibilities of the Porte. The Russians had no scruples on this head and it was in some measure on the Union as a war-cry that they had come into power. I believe that there is not much doubt but that M. Chrestovitch and his party were themselves preparing for the Union, but they had no idea of bringing off the *coup* till the following year. The Liberals, seeing all the instruments ready to their hand, resolved to play a bold game and take the lead out of the grasp of their opponents, not by making a party watchword of the Union, but by simply declaring it as an accomplished fact, and deposing M. Chrestovitch by sudden force. It was the act of desperate men, but as often happens, it succeeded beyond their hopes, as will be seen in the sequel.

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CHAPTER III.

THE UNION.

Karavéloff and Stambuloff as Premier and President of the Chamber —The Declaration of the Union at Chirpan—Shameful treatment of Gavril Pasha—Indecision of the Prince—Stambuloff's advice carries the day—The Prince's Proclamation—The address to the Czar—M. Koyander refuses to forward it—Stambuloff at the telegraph office—Servian feeling at the Union—M. Garashanin on the situation—The "Ambassadorial Declaration"—Prince Alexander writes to King Milan—A model despatch—The first meeting of the Conference at Constantinople.

IN the month of September, 1885, Karavéloff came to Tirnovo, on a tour, and on the morning of the 6th/18th went out for a drive with Stambuloff. A gendarme stopped the carriage, and handed in a telegram from Philippopolis, announcing the success of the revolution and the proclamation of the Prince as sovereign of North and South Bulgaria. Karavéloff was furious, and accused Stambuloff of having precipitated matters, but was met by the answer that the commencement of a plot depended upon the conspirators, but that the exact moment of putting it into execution did not always. The weight of evidence goes to prove that though both the Prince, Stambuloff, Karavéloff, and other leading men in Sofia, were perfectly well aware of what was being planned in Eastern Roumelia, none of them expected the *coup* to come off before the end of October, when the elections were to be held. The Army had not yet been prepared by them for the Union, and the premature explosion was

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equally disagreeable to them all, with this difference, that Stambuloff was the first to perceive the necessity of acknowledging and profiting by the accomplished fact whilst the others were hesitating whether or no to disavow the revolutionary party. It appeared afterwards that the original date fixed for the rising was the 26th September, but various accidents conspired to advance it. Gavril Pasha, early in the month, had paid a visit to Constantinople where he had met with too flattering a reception to please the Liberals, and the day after his return a disturbance broke out at Panagurishté which was, however, repressed without difficulty. On the 15th, though, Gavril Pasha began to suspect that something very serious was brewing, and summoning Drigalsky Pasha, his Commandant of Militia, proposed to arrest Majors Nicolaieff and Mutkûroff. This was easier to advise than to perform, and the rebels, hearing of the intentions of the Government, resolved to wait no longer but to raise the standard of insurrection at once. On the evening of Wednesday, the 15th, riots occurred at Bazardjik and Konâreh, and the Prefect of Philippopolis, who went to the latter village, was arrested by the inhabitants. On Thursday, the union of the two Bulgarias was proclaimed at the hamlet of Chirpan, and only the next day at Philippopolis itself, the reason for this probably being the wish to distract the attention of the authorities. In the small hours of Friday morning Major Nicolaieff at the head of his regiment marched through the streets of the capital, firing volleys to arouse the populace, and was met in the Square by Drigalsky Pasha and his troops, who had been secretly suborned beforehand. The un-

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fortunate Drigalsky was immediately arrested, and Nicolaieff proclaimed himself Chief of the Army. Another considerable body of insurgents now arrived from Konâreh, and Philippopolis was entirely in their power. The sun was rising as Major Nicolaieff led the way to the Government House and read the following manifesto, which had been printed in readiness and was already being distributed broadcast:—

"Brothers! The hour of our Union has struck. The foreign government which has oppressed Roumelia for six years is overthrown. In its place is proclaimed her union with the Principality of Bulgaria, under the sceptre of the Bulgarian Prince, Alexander I.

"Citizens! You are called upon in the name of your country, for the glory and might of Bulgaria, to hasten to the aid of the sacred cause, and to uphold it by a strict maintenance of the public peace. Remember that he who should allow himself to commit any act of violence or robbery, especially on foreigners, whom all are to protect as their own brethren, will be severely punished.

"Officers and Soldiers! Sons of Bulgaria! The Secret Committee summons you to hold your heads high beneath the proud Lion of Bulgaria, and in presence of the might of Christendom. Against whom and for whom are you now fighting? Remember, Sons of Bulgaria, that you are degraded by serving under the Crescent, the flag of those who have persecuted us for five centuries!

"Shepherds of the flock! Ye who have protected and guarded Bulgaria for five hundred years, lift up the Cross of the Saviour, and bless our holy cause—our Union.

"Until civilized Europe shall have recognised our sacred national cause, and the troops of Alexander I. have occupied Thrace, a Provisional Government has been formed to dispose of all resources, and to administer the Province. To it must all submit.

"May God help us, and Forward!

"By order of the SECRET COMMITTEE."

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The Provisional Government, which was formed on the spot, consisted of Dr. Stransky, editor of the newspaper the *Borba*, as President, and a dozen members the most prominent of whom were Majors Nicolaieff and Mutkûroff.

After reading this proclamation, which was received with frenzied applause, three of the leading insurgents, MM. Zachary Stoyânoff, Zedaroff, and Andonoff, were deputed to inform Gavril Pasha of what had happened and to request him to leave Philippopolis, where his further presence was not desirable. Here followed a discreditable piece of buffoonery, as the wretched Pasha was forced to take his seat in an open carriage, in which was already seated a peasant-girl decked in ribbons and holding a naked sword. He turned pale when he saw the insult prepared for him but was compelled to submit, and in this ridiculous fashion was paraded past the Russian Consulate which hoisted its flag as the procession moved by, and through the whole town, amidst the laughter and jeers of the mob. He was then taken to Konâreh, and shortly afterwards to Sofia.*

The Provisional Government immediately telegraphed to the Prince at his palace of Sandrovo, near Bourgas, and His Highness started straightway for Tirnovo, telegraphing to Karavéloff and Stambuloff to await him there.

He arrived on the 19th, and a consultation was held. Karavéloff was still in two minds as to which course

* Those who can read Russian may be recommended the pamphlet of E. Lvoff, entitled *The Roumelian Revolution*, for a minute and detailed description of the events of these few days.

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it would be expedient to pursue, but Stambuloff urged the Prince to seize the opportunity.

Alexander feared that if he accepted the invitation of the insurgents, besides incurring the certain heavy displeasure of the Porte, he would probably have most, if not all, of the Powers against him. The only one which he fancied might in reality approve him was Russia, and at that time he certainly had ground for a hope which turned out so utterly unfounded. On the other hand, should he refuse he was likely to offend the whole Bulgarian nation.

Stambuloff was most decided in his advice. "Sire," he said, "the Union is made—the revolt is an accomplished fact, past recall, and the time for hesitation is gone by. Two roads lie before your Highness: the one to Philippopolis, and as far further as God may lead; the other to Sistoff, the Danube, and Darmstadt. I counsel you to take the crown the nation offers you."

After a short reflection Alexander answered, "I choose the road to Philippopolis; and if God loves Bulgaria, may He protect me and her."

Before leaving Tirnovo, Alexander issued his royal proclamation, as follows:

"We, Alexander I., by the grace of God and the will of the Nation, Prince of the Two Bulgarias of the North and South.

"We inform our well-beloved people that on the 18th of this month the population of the province called Eastern Roumelia, after deposing the Government which up to now ruled there, and after forming a Provisional Government, declared the Union of the Province of Eastern Roumelia with the Principality of Bulgaria, and unanimously elected me as their Prince.

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"With due consideration for the weal of the Bulgarian race, and for its earnest desire to see the two Bulgarias made one, and in view of the accomplishment of the national destiny, I recognise the Union, and agree henceforth to be and to be styled Prince of North and South Bulgaria.

"In accepting the government of this province, I declare that the life, property, and honour of all its peaceable inhabitants shall be safeguarded and guaranteed.

"All necessary measures have been taken for the maintenance of the public peace, and any who trouble it will be proceeded against with the utmost severity.

"I trust that my beloved people on both sides of the Balkans, who have welcomed this great event with such enthusiastic joy, will assist me to consolidate the sacred work—the Union of the Two Bulgarias—and will be ready for any sacrifice and any effort in order to guarantee the union and independence of our dear country.

"May God help us in this, our great and indispensable undertaking.

"Given at the ancient capital of Tirnovo,
"the 8th/20th September, 1885,
(Signed) "ALEXANDER."

On that day, the party started for Philippopolis. Two carriages, escorted by forty mounted policemen, carried the destinies of Bulgaria. In the front one rode the Prince and his Premier, Karavéloff, and in the second Stambuloff. All three were fully alive to the momentousness of the step they were taking. The future was filled with a thousand menaces and they had but a vague idea of what the issue might be. By the publication of the proclamation, they had taken an irrevocable plunge. It was certain that the Porte would at once appeal to the Powers against so flagrant a violation of the Treaty of

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Berlin. Beyond that, no eye could see. Would Turkey meet with the support of all, or any of the signatories? Would Russia approve or disapprove of an Union completed without consulting her, and effected by the overthrow of her nominee? Would they be left alone to cope with the Sultan, or would some Power be found to hold out a friendly hand to them in their desperate need?

Seldom, if ever, had so apparently hopeless a struggle been undertaken by a new-born State, as yet a baby in political strife. For at this period, Bulgaria was only vaguely known to the civilised world as a place where atrocities had been perpetrated, but she was not viewed as a factor in European diplomacy, or considered as anything more than a nondescript mushroom creation of the Treaty. Everybody knows the satirical remark of Prince Bismarck to Prince Alexander upon his acceptance of the throne—"It will be an interesting reminiscence for Your Highness." Up till then Bulgaria had never been taken *au sérieux*, and now she was striking a blow destined to call the whole attention of Europe upon her. Before the 18th September, Bulgaria was a quantity unknown, and unsuspected except to a very few: from that date she took her place among the pieces on the chessboard with a definite value. The Prince and Karavéloff were unfamiliar with such a situation, but Stambuloff was quite in his element, and as he climbed the slopes of the Balkans behind them, he must have felt that he was driving before him the life or death of his country. At the various stages on their route, notably at Shipka and Kezanlik, they met with magnificent ovations, and a display of patriotic enthusiasm which

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augured well for the venture. On the 21st they reached Philippopolis.

Here they found affairs in a state of great uncertainty. The Russian Consulate kept a neutral attitude, but the military attaché, Colonel Chichagoff, immediately waited upon the Prince, and remained in close attendance upon him for some days. It was hurriedly decided to convoke the Chamber, to mobilise the troops, and to send a deputation to implore the countenance of the Czar, who was then at Copenhagen. Meanwhile, in Sofia, M. Koyander had received a telegram from the Emperor strongly disapproving the Union, ordering Prince Cantacuzene, the Minister for War, to resign his functions, and to remain merely as military attaché to the Agency, and forbidding all Russian officers in the Bulgarian army to take part in the movement. This news was sedulously spread, and created a most painful impression amongst the Bulgarians, who saw their fondest hopes rudely shattered at the outset. The Opposition immediately began to organise, and prepared a meeting, at which it was intended to propose the dethronement of the Prince. This move was countered, however, by the proclamation of a state of siege, and Major Nikiforoff, a young Bulgarian officer of artillery, 28 years of age, was named Minister of War. The rupture with Russia was now open, and it was clear that by withdrawing her officers, she expected to paralyse the army, which, at that date, had only two Bulgarian field officers in North Bulgaria, who had ever even commanded a company. Prince Alexander, who had hitherto been regarded as a creature of Russia, leapt at a bound into popularity, and from this

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time forth placed his sole reliance upon the people he governed, and they, exulting in having at length won over their Prince, were ready for any sacrifice that he might demand from them.

The Chamber was convoked for the 22nd, and on the 23rd M. Karavéloff read the Speech from the Throne, recapitulating recent events, and he added that in this the Prince had acted with the full consent of his Ministers. An extraordinary credit of five million francs, for mobilisation, was passed without discussion.

An address was also voted to the Czar, begging His Majesty to reconsider his decision in the matter of his officers, and not to abandon Bulgaria in her need.

Nine leading members of the House, amongst whom were Stambuloff and Zankoff, were deputed to carry this address to M. Koyander, and request him to transmit it by telegraph to the Czar. Having sent to know when they could be received, the hour of eleven next morning was fixed. Upon entering the Russian Agency the deputation found M. Koyander and Prince Cantacuzene, in full uniform, surrounded by the consular staff, but when Stambuloff stepped forward to read the address, M. Koyander bluntly told him to be silent, as he refused to receive it.

The feelings of the Bulgarians may be imagined. Stambuloff, with tears of rage in his eyes, exclaimed: "By your refusal to accept the address of the Bulgarian nation, you turn us out of your Agency, but remember my words, the day will come when you will throw open both your doors and nobody will enter."

Prince Cantacuzene, who was a friend of Stambuloff,

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tried to calm him, embraced him, and addressed him in affectionate terms, but Koyander laughed contemptuously. The deputation left hurriedly, and Stambuloff drove to the telegraph office, where he gave instructions that no message from M. Koyander was to be forwarded for twenty-four hours, and meanwhile wired the address himself to the Czar at Copenhagen. On the 24th an answer was received, maintaining the prohibition, and adding that, after the sacrifices Russia had made for Bulgaria, she had a right to be consulted prior to the taking of any vital measures.

The Chamber met again in the afternoon, and on a speech from Stambuloff, passed a credit of ten million francs in case of war, which was now looked upon as inevitable, and also a Law of Requisition, enabling the Government to seize and use whatever it might need. The Budget for 1886 was voted *en bloc*, in anticipation, and a delegation, with the Archbishop Clement at the head, was chosen to go and intercede with the Emperor of Russia in person.

While Bulgaria was thus straining every nerve to put herself in a posture of defence, the Porte and the Powers were actively exchanging notes, the key to all of them being the same, namely, the prevention of the movement spreading into Macedonia, and the preservation of the peace.

Prince Alexander had given a formal assurance to Europe that he would use his best endeavours to avoid bloodshed, but that the existing state of doubt was full of dangers, and if it continued much longer he would be compelled to disarm the excited Mussulman population.

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The Powers had been so taken by surprise, that for the first few days they scarcely could fix upon a course to pursue; but, on the 26th, Russia came forward with a proposal for "an *informal* Conference of the Ambassadors of the Great Powers, at Constantinople, in order to come to an understanding as to the identical language to be held to the Porte, and the Prince of Bulgaria, in the name of Europe, in order to avoid a conflict and effusion of blood, and to gain time for consideration."

Sir William White was the British representative at this Conference, and the following instructions were sent to him on the 27th of September. They are remarkable as showing how England carried through the two Conferences the points she had fixed upon before the first meeting of the first one:

"The general tenour of the advice which you are empowered to offer on the part of Her Majesty's Government should be that the Sultan should abstain from military intervention in Eastern Roumelia, provided always that no violence is used against His Majesty's Mussulman subjects in that province. You should also recommend that the change to be made in the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin should be limited to the appointment of Prince Alexander to be Governor-General for life of Eastern Roumelia. It may not be found possible to obtain the necessary unanimity of assent to this arrangement, but it is that which Her Majesty's representative should use his best efforts to secure. You should resist any proposals for the Prince's deposition.

(Signed) "SALISBURY."

Thus early it was apparent that Bulgaria would receive some measure of support, but probably she owed her salvation from an immediate attack by Turkey to the

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well-known fears of the Sultan for his personal safety. There were only some 30,000 Turkish troops in the Vilayet of Adrianople, and to send the forty or fifty thousand picked men who perpetually guard the capital, would have left the Palace at the mercy of those conspirators, whose supposed existence is an ever present terror to His Majesty. Not having taken action upon the first news of the outbreak, it became far more difficult to do so when once the Powers had commenced to work upon the question as a diplomatic one. The danger from Turkey, therefore, grew gradually less as the days passed by, and the Bulgarians saw with delight that they were not likely to be molested by their Suzerain, provided they kept the promises of loyalty, which they made in profusion. On the other hand, their neighbours, the Greeks and Serbs, were in a condition of boiling fury at the sudden aggrandisement of Bulgaria. As nothing came of the Greek agitation, it may be passed over in silence, although at one time it threatened the greatest perils. Such strong representations were, however, made by the Powers, that any nation which should break the peace by advancing into Macedonia would incur the combined reprobation of all the Great Powers, that Greece reluctantly held her hand.

The Serbs, on the contrary, were deaf to all remonstrances. Their view of the situation, as given by M. Garashanin to the Representatives of the Powers, and also to myself in private conversation, was as follows:

"Servia could not possibly look on with indifference to a sudden doubling of the size and power of Bulgaria. She had done her best to fulfil her part of the Treaty of

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Berlin, and it had been no easy task for her, exhausted as she was by the wars which had preceded the signature of that instrument. On the other hand, Turkey had done very little on behalf of Macedonia and Armenia, and Bulgaria had neither built her railways, nor dismantled her Danube forts. Nevertheless, these two were now about to change the Berlin Treaty in favour of Bulgaria, and Servia could not and would not stand any such arrangement detrimental to her own interests."

He further quoted to me the Turkish proverb, "*The naked man jumps the farthest,*" meaning that Servia was in such desperate case that she had nothing to lose, and everything to gain.

Referring to Blue Books, I find that M. Garashanin used almost the same words as I have in my notes to Mr. Wyndham, who met him with the obvious retort that if the Treaty of Berlin was infringed, it was the business of the signatories, and not certainly that of Servia, to protect it, and if Prince Alexander was encroaching upon the rights of his Suzerain, it was for the latter to chastise his vassal.

Anybody who knows M. Garashanin and King Milan will, however, understand how futile were the best of arguments poured into their unwilling ears.

On the 21st the King returned suddenly to Belgrade (on the same day that Prince Alexander entered Philippopolis), and held a Cabinet Council the same night at which it was decided to mobilise the Army and Militia, and to convoke an extraordinary session of the Skuptchina, at Nish, on the 2nd October.

At the opening of this session King Milan made a speech, insisting upon the necessity of restoring the

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status quo ante in the Balkans, and appealing to the patriotism of the Deputies to vote all the supplies which should be asked for. The Skuptchina acted in the same fashion as the Bulgarian Sobranieh had done, and after sanctioning all the projects presented to it, dissolved on the 4th October. It was on this date that Sir F. Lascelles, who had been away on leave, and had returned to Sofia, went on to Philippopolis and joined Prince Alexander, giving the first overt sign of English friendliness to the cause of the Union, a sign which excited the vexation of Russia more than any other Power, and called forth lively remonstrances from the St. Petersburg Foreign Office. These had no effect, and from that time forth Sir F. Lascelles continued by the side of Prince Alexander. Meanwhile, the Ambassadors at Constantinople had finally, after much phrase-paring, succeeded in producing the following declaration, which was presented to the Sultan, Prince Alexander, and the Courts of Greece and Servia:

"The Signatory Powers of the Treaty of Berlin, appreciating the great wisdom and the sentiments of moderation of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, have deigned to receive favourably the request for assistance which the Ottoman Government has addressed to them, with a view to putting an end to the troubles agitating Eastern Roumelia.

"They condemn all violation of existing Treaties, and entirely disapprove of the proceedings which have taken place in the province in question.

"They will hold responsible those in power on either side of the Balkans for any act tending to propagate the agitation in the neighbouring provinces.

"They invite the leaders of the Bulgarian forces, in the interest of peace, not to concentrate troops on the

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Roumelian frontier, and to suspend their armaments, warning the Bulgarian populations against hasty and ill-considered action, of which they would have to suffer the consequences without hope of any foreign assistance."

At first glance this "Ambassadorial Declaration" may appear rather a *ridiculus mus*, but it was not arrived at until after much dispute, not only amongst the Ambassadors, but at every capital in Europe, England invariably resisting all attempts to interpolate words implicating personal blame on Prince Alexander, or hinting at a restoration of the *status quo ante.* The real sense of the declaration amounted merely to an expression of regret at the violation of the Treaty of Berlin, coupled with an appreciation of the kindly manner in which it had been taken by the Porte, which was equivalent to saying that a continuance of its attitude would be most pleasing to them. The warning addressed to Bulgaria, and the other little States, was a natural corollary.

It was, however, evident that this document could never be considered as the last word of Europe, and as soon as it had been handed in the Powers began an exchange of views as to the advisability of summoning an International Congress—*formal* this time, to go more deeply into the question.

The note of the Ambassadors having been duly communicated to all concerned was received with polite thanks, but neither Greece nor Servia paid much attention to its peaceful recommendations. Prince Alexander, seeing the hostile attitude of Servia, resolved to write a friendly letter to "his brother," King Milan, begging him to restrain the warlike spirit which was

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abroad, and notified his intention of doing so to the Court at Belgrade. The letter was to be carried by M. Grékoff, and M. Garashanin, on hearing of the mission, expressed his warmest thanks and satisfaction for this mark of amity. Thereupon M. Grékoff started with the letter, and Prince Alexander on the 18th October telegraphed to King Milan to advise him of the fact. He was no less surprised than annoyed to receive an immediate answer from the King declining to see M. Grékoff or accept the letter. The Prince had left Sofia, and reached Radomir on his way back to Philippopolis when the news of this insult was brought to him, and he instantly turned back to the capital, fancying that the refusal to read his letter would probably be quickly followed by a declaration of war. Nothing, however, came of this freak of King Milan's, and on the 26th the Prince agreed to the advice of his ministers to re-visit Philippopolis. This advice was based upon the growing discontent in Roumelia, whose population did not believe in the probability of Servia's attacking Bulgaria, but looked upon the military preparations in the neighbourhood of Sofia as a mere pretext for the withdrawal of troops, and for the absence of the Prince himself from Eastern Roumelia, just at the time when they imagined the Porte might be authorised by the Powers to use force to re-establish the *status quo ante.*

They also complained that no measures had as yet been taken for completing the administrative union between the two Bulgarias, which was true, but the reason for this was that the whole energies of the Government were being directed to one point, namely,

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the organisation of the Army, which, by the departure of its Russian officers, had been thrown into a state of temporary disorder. Besides the mere filling up of the *cadres*, there was also an immensity of work going on in the matter of calling out and arming the Reserves and Militia, and all administrative questions were put away into the background. Nevertheless, the Opposition were not slow to take advantage of these circumstances to proclaim that Prince Alexander was abandoning his Roumeliote subjects, and it therefore became absolutely necessary for him to show himself at Philippopolis.

Upon his arrival, he at once placed the various departments under their respective ministers at Sofia, and the Provisional Government was dissolved. In this simple but business-like manner the administrative union was accomplished, though of course a thousand details remained for future elaboration. On the 31st October deputations from all the districts of Eastern Roumelia called upon the Prince, and expressed their unbounded confidence in him and their determination to maintain the Union. The Prince replied, regretting that the Power to which they had looked the most for assistance had abandoned them. Other Powers, however, especially England, had shown themselves favourably disposed, and it would be necessary to await the decision of the Conference, but if required he would defend the Union by all means in his power.*

The day following, the Marquis of Salisbury addressed to Sir W. White his preliminary instructions for the forthcoming Conference, and though they are too lengthy

* *Blue Book, Turkey*, No. 1, 1886, p. 195.

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to reproduce in full, yet some extracts from this most statesmanlike and model despatch * will help to a clear understanding of the position taken up by England towards Bulgaria and the Porte.

"In undertaking to join with the other Powers in seeking for a solution of existing difficulties which should be substantially on the basis of the Treaty of Berlin, H.M's Government do not understand themselves to be bound to recommend adherence to the exact letter of that Treaty.

"They rather contemplate the adoption of arrangements which shall conduce to the security of the main objects of the Treaty, and be in accordance with its general spirit; and they wish to attain that end with as little disturbance as possible of its precise provisions. It has, however, been intimated to them that the Turkish Government look to an entire and exact re-establishment of the state of things sanctioned by the Treaty of Berlin, that they are supported by some of the other Powers in this view, and that the Conference has been summoned with the hope, on the part of some of the signatories of the Treaty, that it will give its sanction to such diplomatic or material measures as may be necessary for insuring that end.

"Her Majesty's Government do not at all contend that the Sultan has not a perfect right, according to the strict letter of the Treaty, to take military measures for restoring the state of things as it existed three months ago. . . . . But totally different questions come into view when it is proposed that any action of this kind on the Sultan's part shall take place under the direct sanction of the Great Powers represented in the Conference. The European Powers would not be justified in giving to the supposed action of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, the support of their authority or assistance, unless they were satisfied, not only of its legality, but of its general expediency and wisdom. . . . . The

* *Blue Book, Turkey*, No. 1, 1886, p. 197.

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question which they are bound to determine before giving advice to the Porte on this matter, is whether the restoration of the *status quo ante* is in itself desirable under the circumstances.

"The argument in its favour, which appears to have weighed with some of the Powers, is that it will be a signal instance of homage paid to Treaty Law, and that it will impress upon the Balkan States generally, a great veneration for the Treaty of Berlin.

"That this would be a most desirable end to achieve, no one can dispute. The only question is, whether this really would be the impression left upon the minds of the population of the Peninsula, by the prevention of any Union of Bulgaria with Eastern Roumelia. If the present attempt to set aside one provision of the Treaty should miscarry, they will no doubt reflect seriously upon the causes to which that miscarriage is due. They are hardly likely, however, to attribute it entirely to the veneration in which Treaty Law in the Balkan Peninsula is held by the Powers of Europe. Present inhabitants of the Peninsula have lived through many phases of Treaty arrangement in that region, and have seen those arrangements set aside again and again, not by negotiation, but by force. It is needless to recapitulate the events which led to the establishment of the kingdoms of Greece, Roumania, and Servia, or of the principalities of Bulgaria and Montenegro. The origin of these States was in no case the result of a scrupulous observance of Treaties, and the people of the Peninsula will, therefore, hardly attribute the failure of the Roumelians, if they should fail, to the fact that they have violated a Treaty. It is evident that they will have to seek the origin of the miscarriage in some other cause. . . . . In authorising you, therefore, to take part in the Conference, which has been summoned by the Porte, Her Majesty's Government must guard themselves from expressing any approval of a simple return to the state of things which existed at the commencement of last September. If such a proposal is made, you will not give to it your sanction without previous reference to me.

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"It will be necessary also to receive with great caution any proposal for summoning Prince Alexander to withdraw from Eastern Roumelia, unless some intention is indicated of considering the wishes which the Eastern Roumelians have expressed. Such a demand would hardly be of any practical value for the purposes of those who make it, unless it contains, in a more or less disguised form, a threat of the use of force in case it should be disobeyed. As Her Majesty's Government are not prepared to take the responsibility of advising the Turkish Government to use force for the purpose of restoring the former state of things, they would not willingly join in taking steps which would naturally lead to such a policy."

The Conference met on the 5th of November, and at short intervals during the following weeks, and the cause of the Union was defended with consummate patience and skill by Sir William White. In the midst of its deliberations, the aspect of affairs was largely modified by the outbreak of hostilities between Servia and Bulgaria. This carries us one stage further in the history of the Principality.

Little mention has been made lately of Stambuloff, but in order to grasp subsequent events, and to follow the fortunes of Bulgaria, it is necessary to continue the thread of the story as briefly as may be, even when his personality is momentarily in the shade.

It must not be thought, however, that during the months of September and October, the President of the Chamber was idle. He was steadily consolidating his party, and extending his own influence both amongst its members and with the Prince and his *entourage*, and as soon as occasion required, he was seen to the front.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE SERVIAN WAR.

Prince Alexander and the Czar—Withdrawal of Russian officers from the Bulgarian Army — Declaration of war by Servia — Received by the Prince at Philippopolis—Hurried return to Sofia — Stambuloff is sent with a disagreeable message into camp at Slivnitza—He fights as a private in Colonel Nicolaieff's brigade—The Bulgarians enter Nish—Austria in front and Russia behind—The forced Armistice—The Commission of Military Attachés—Negotiations at Constantinople—A brief Treaty of Peace is signed at Bucharest.

IN order to understand the perilous position of Bulgaria, one must bear in mind the following facts: On the day that the Conference met, November 5th, Prince Alexander's name was struck off the roll of the Russian army, and the 13th Battalion of Rifles in the Russian service ceased to bear his name. In other words, the rupture between the Bulgarian people and the Russian agents was confirmed by a definite casting-off of the Prince by his patron, the Czar.*

* When the deputation was received at Copenhagen, the Czar used the following words textually: "O razyedenenié e rétchi buit ne módjef: no poká û Vass núinshe pravitelstvo ne jdîte ot meniâ nitchevó, nitchevó, nitchevó"—"There can be no question whatever of dissolving the Union, but as long as you keep your present Government, expect from me nothing, nothing, nothing!" Upon hearing this answer, Stambuloff repaired to M. Koyander, and enquired what was meant by "present Government," as, if the term applied to Karavéloff as Premier, or to him as President of the Chamber, they were both ready to resign. M. Koyander replied that it meant Prince Alexander; and as long as he remained in Bulgaria, Russia would do nothing to help her.

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The Conference had a large majority in favour of the restitution of the *status quo ante*, and the Porte's proposals for the immediate withdrawal of the Prince from Eastern Roumelia and the appointment of another Governor-General was supported by three or four of the Great Powers, with Russia at the head, and only England really opposing it. Not content with using every effort at Constantinople, the Turkish Representative in London, Musurus Pasha, was urging Lord Salisbury to give way,* and it was England alone which, during the critical fortnight before the war, preserved the union.

The army was untried, and officered by young lieutenants who had replaced the Russian instructors, whilst the whole administrative machine was out of gear through the sudden addition to its responsibilities of the Eastern Roumelian departments. It certainly looked as if Bulgaria must fall an easy prey to any onslaught, and the temptation to attack them at so opportune a moment was irresistible to King Milan and M. Garashanin.

It was on the 14th of November that the Servian

* On the 12th November, Musurus Pasha called upon Lord Salisbury, and after reading the protocols of the Conference, begged him to address such advice to the Prince as should induce him to submit to the Porte, and return to Sofia. The Pasha several times repeated that unless the Prince gave in, the penalty would be the loss of his position as Ruler of Bulgaria. Lord Salisbury answered that he would much regret such a result, though he did not see how it was going to be brought about; but that if Turkey lent herself to this policy, she was making herself the instrument of those who desired the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and that H.M.'s Government could not assume the responsibility of concurring in it.—*Blue Book, Turkey*, No. 1, 1886, p. 214.

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Government declared war by an open telegram, couched in the following terms:

"The Commander of the First Division and the Frontier Authorities announce simultaneously that to-day, the 13th of November, at half-past seven in the morning, the Bulgarian troops attacked the positions held by the 1st Regiment of Infantry on Servian territory, in the neighbourhood of Vlassina. The Royal Government consider this unprovoked aggression as a declaration of war. I request you to notify in my name to M. Tsanoff, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that Servia, in accepting the consequences of this attack, considers herself at war with the Principality of Bulgaria from Saturday, 6 a.m., the 14th November."

This telegram was addressed by M. Garashanin to M. Rangabé, who was in charge of Servian interests in Sofia. I have forborne to detail the multifarious pretexts sought by Servia previously in order to pick a quarrel, and as regards the substance of the preceding despatch, will merely add that it was instantly denied that any Bulgarian troops had crossed the frontier. The state of feeling was, however, so strained, and Servia was so resolutely determined upon war, that it was inevitable. It would have been absurd for Bulgaria to wish for a conflict under the circumstances, and there can be little, if any, doubt that the pretence alleged by Servia was false.

The Prince, at this date, was living in the Konak at Philippopolis with his brother Joseph, and both Karavéloff and Stambuloff were in the habit of daily lunching and dining with him. On the evening of the 14th, after dinner, the two Bulgarian statesmen, with the Prince's young brother, adjourned to the telegraph room, where they sat

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down to a game of cards. Towards three o'clock in the morning the machine began to tick and the clerk read off the telegram quoted above. They immediately roused the Prince, and consulted as to the most pressing measures to be taken. Major Vinâroff was instructed to draw up a manifesto to the army, and Stambuloff one to the nation. Shortly after daylight prayer was held in the cathedral, and Prince Alexander started for the front, being accompanied by Karavéloff as far as Sofia, Stambuloff staying behind to complete arrangements in Philippopolis until the evening, when he, with Dr. Stransky, followed.

I do not propose to give an account of the campaign, which has been ably described in previous works, but shall confine myself to jotting down the principal events in their sequence.

Upon his arrival at Sofia, Stambuloff was met by Karavéloff, who informed him that Tsaribrod had been taken by the Serbs, and that the Bulgarians were in retreat. The truth was that the Serbs, being numerically far stronger, and having concentrated their forces beforehand on a fixed plan, had beaten in the Bulgarian frontier defence, and were advancing full of confidence. The situation was critical in the extreme, and it was of vital importance to hold every inch of ground until reinforcements could be brought up from the south. These were coming up hourly in gallant fashion, two men often riding on one horse, and the infantry making forced marches of great length, several regiments from Belovo having come in—seventy kilometres—to Sofia, within twenty-four hours.

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On the 17th a message came from Slivnitza, saying that the army was in great straits for provisions and ammunition, and was very inferior in numbers to the invaders.

A council was held at 2 a.m., at which it was decided that the Prince might return to Sofia if he judged fit, but that the position was to be held by the army at all hazards, and Stambuloff was deputed to carry the resolution to the Prince. He found His Highness sitting on a litter of straw in his tent, which was surrounded with wounded and dead, over which a priest was performing the last rites. Prince Alexander received the decision of his Council very ill, being vexed, in the first instance, that they should offer themselves to dictate the movements of the Army, and secondly, at the suggestion that he should quit the camp, a step he scouted the idea of taking.

On the 19th the Bulgarians gained their first advantage, and were, moreover, strongly reinforced. The fighting continued for several days more with small intermission, and ended, as everybody knows, in the utter defeat and rout of the Servian Army, which was pursued through Pirot to Nish. Stambuloff, whose pugnacious disposition revelled in conflict, entered as a volunteer in Colonel Nicolaieff's brigade, and fought throughout the campaign as a private. During this period he was in frequent contact with Prince Alexander and the old misunderstanding between them was buried for ever. From the conclusion of the war to the day of his quitting Bulgaria Prince Alexander looked almost exclusively to Stambuloff for advice and support, and the ties which bound them were not those of master

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and servant so much as an affectionate respect on each side for the qualities of the other.

Whilst the Bulgars and the Serbs were engaged in earnest battle at Slivnitza, Tsaribrod, Pirot, and Nish, the Conference of Ambassadors at Constantinople was carrying on a series of engagements hardly less exciting, if more peaceable in form, over the white surface of Protocols.

By hurrying up every available man to the Servian frontier, Prince Alexander had, probably quite unwittingly, taken away one of the principal arms from those who were in favour of a restitution of the *status quo ante.* England was now able to say that the Prince had withdrawn with his troops from Eastern Roumelia, and there was no longer any need to fear complications arising from their presence. By pertinaciously adhering to her original line, she succeeded in delaying any decision adverse to the Union until the brilliant victories of the Bulgarian Army had given the Prince quite a new standing in the eyes of the Powers.

When war was declared, all Europe expected to see the Servian Army occupy Sofia within a fortnight, but when, in about that space of time, it was to all intents and purposes annihilated, and the Bulgarians were marching on to Belgrade without the slightest chance of meeting with any serious opposition,* both Russia and Austria thought it time to interfere.

Count Khevenhuller accordingly entered the camp, and peremptorily told Prince Alexander that if he went any further, he would find himself with Austrians, instead of

* The Servian troops had only one round of ammunition, per man, left when Austria forbade the Bulgarian advance.

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Servians, in front of him, and a Russian force behind him. In the face of such a declaration, there was nothing to be done but to submit, and a short armistice was proclaimed. The Conference wished to arrange a long armistice preparatory to the signature of peace, but Prince Alexander refused to sign one as long as any Servian troops remained on Bulgarian territory. A long and tedious wrangle over this question went on all through December, and finally the Powers decided to appoint a Military Commission to arbitrate on the results of the war, and decide the respective advantages and losses to be gained and borne by both parties. This Commission was formed of the various military attachés to the Court at Vienna, amongst whom were General Kaulbars, for Russia, and Colonel Keith Fraser, for England. They met at Pirot, and drew up the conditions of the armistice in five articles, with a preamble to the effect that they recognised the advantages gained by the Bulgarian Army.

Article i. stated that the armistice concluded at Pirot on that day, the 21st December, should last until the 1st March, 1886.

Article ii. provided for the evacuation by belligerent troops of the territory respectively occupied by them, the Servians to evacuate first, and such evacuation to be complete by the 25th December, whilst the evacuation by the Bulgarians was to be completed two days later.

Article iii. provided for a neutral zone of three kilometres along the frontier.

Article iv. treated of the return of prisoners.

Article v. provided for the immediate appointment of

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delegates charged with negotiations for the conclusion of peace.

It will be seen that Bulgaria received no compensation, and no reward for her brilliant little campaign, but it nevertheless secured to her a large measure of sympathy and respect, and was indirectly the cause of the closing of the famous Conference, which died a natural death whilst the armistice negotiations were in progress. The last meeting was held on November 25th, when the Turkish delegates made a desperate effort to carry their list of resolutions, but were stoutly resisted by Sir William White.*

Seeing that it had no chance of obtaining the unanimous consent of the Representatives so long as the British refused his adhesion, the Turkish Government tried one of the ruses which enter so largely into the essence of Eastern diplomacy. It drew up a copy of the Turkish resolutions as proposed at the Conference, and adding that they had been approved by the Representatives of certain of the Powers, invited the population of Eastern Roumelia to submit to these. This document was despatched, with some hurry and secrecy, by two special delegates to Philippopolis. The Russian, Austrian, and Italian Governments instructed their Consuls in that city to act as delegates, together with the two Turkish

* M. De Giers, in Petersburg, observed to Sir Robert Morier, in the course of conversation, that after this meeting the Representatives had adjourned, "formally till Saturday, but really *sine die*. This result had been brought about by Sir William White having demanded the suppression of Articles 3 and 4 of the Turkish Resolutions, and that of all reference to the Treaty of Berlin." *Blue Book, Turkey*, No. 1. 1886, p. 371.

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emissaries, for the choosing of a Governor-General, or other points in the programme, and it looked almost as if the trick were going to succeed, and the resolutions were to be foisted upon Roumelia as the result of the Conference, which they were not. England, however, instantly entered a most energetic protest, and the Roumelians themselves received the delegates very coolly. The Russian Consul-General proposed that an official reception should be given to them, intimating that Turkish troops would surely occupy the province, should the wishes of the Sultan not be complied with. The representative members of the meeting in which he held this language, declared that they would resist a Turkish army if necessary, and would prefer to return to the *status quo ante* rather than submit to Russian influence; and carried a resolution begging the Consular body to use their influence to obtain the recall of the delegates, whom they looked upon as Russian agents.

The Prefect of Philippopolis, on the grounds that a state of siege existed, prevented the Ottoman emissaries from publishing or otherwise distributing their proclamation, and the attempt ended in fiasco, but it is worth quoting as a specimen of the kind of attacks Bulgaria was being subjected to by the Porte and Russia.

The Bulgarians by this time fancied that they could, perhaps, come to terms with the Porte by themselves, and in January despatched M. Tsanoff, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Constantinople, to treat with Said Pasha. The result was that, on the 1st February, the bases of a Turco-Bulgarian agreement were decided upon, almost identical with those mentioned by the Marquis of

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Salisbury in his first despatch of November, 1885. The only point on which there seemed to be a likelihood of dissension was the provision for a five-yearly renewal of the Firman appointing the Prince as Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia. Another Conference was called, and the same tactics were pursued by all parties respectively. Prince Alexander, however, refused altogether the quinquennial Firman, and his attitude on this point caused considerable embarrassment. Finally, however, he agreed, out of deference to the Powers, to accept an agreement, which was, in effect, a compromise, simply naming him Governor-General, "according to Article xvii. of the Treaty of Berlin," not for life, as he wished, nor for five years as the Porte had proposed. A Special Commission was to be named by the Sultan and the Prince, to revise and modify, where necessary, the Organic Statute, taking into consideration the needs of the people, and the interests of the Ottoman Treasury.

In other respects all the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin were to remain in force.

The Special Commission was to work for four months, and lay the results of its labours before a Conference of the Powers, which would then discuss and give their formal sanction to the revised Statute.

Before this had been carried through peace had been signed at Bucharest, on the 3rd March, in the briefest possible manner, between Bulgaria and Servia. Neither party would agree to the insertion of any phrase hinting that amicable relations had been restored, and a cat-and-dog Treaty was framed in one Article as follows :—

"Peace is re-established from this date between the Kingdom of Servia and the Principality of Bulgaria."

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By the beginning of the summer of 1886 Bulgaria seemed in a fair way to conquer all her difficulties, and had it not been for the implacable animosity of Russia, there is no saying how far she would have succeeded. The first incident in this connection was the discovery of a plot, at Bourgas, hatched by a Russian officer, a Captain Nabôkoff, aided by some Montenegrins, for abducting the Prince if possible, or in the event of resistance, for killing him. The accusation was strenuously denied, both by the Captain and by the Russian Foreign Office, which seemed inclined at one moment to make a diplomatic question of it, but the Bulgarians having released their prisoners, and handed them over to the Russian Consulate, the matter was allowed to drop. Viewed in the light of subsequent events, there can be little doubt that the plot existed; in fact, the one aim and object of Russia was to get rid of Prince Alexander, who, from being a passive tool in her hands, now showed far too much independence to please her. Meanwhile, the Special Commission had begun its labours for the re-organization of Eastern Roumelia, and the first National Assembly with Roumelian Deputies had met at Sofia. The elections had not been carried without some disorder, giving fresh grounds for Russian complaints, which culminated in strong indignation at the Speech from the Throne at the opening of the Assembly. In this speech the Prince congratulated the Deputies on the Union, and made no mention of the Treaty of Berlin, of the Commission for the Revision of the Statute, and, most heinous of all omissions, no traditional expression of gratitude to Russia. This

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speech was blamed all over Europe, and Russia took advantage of the indiscretion to urge once more upon the various Cabinets the necessity of reducing the growing spirit of independence shown by Prince Alexander, to some sort of obedience to the dictates of the Powers.

In the middle of all these conflicts and discussions came the *Coup d'état*, which upset the whole course of events in a most theatrical and unexpected fashion.

During the period between the war and the *Coup d'état*, which I have just sketched as rapidly as possible, Stambuloff contented himself with his practice as a lawyer, and took small part in public life beyond fulfilling his duties as President of the Chamber.

We shall, however, soon find him assuming a commanding position, from which he was only ousted last year.

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CHAPTER V.

THE *COUP D'ÉTAT.*

Bendereff slaps his elbow—The intercepted letter—A woman's caprice —"Where is Prince Alexander?"—The Zankoffists in the mud—Clement's Provisional Government of twelve hours—Stambuloff's Manifesto—Panoff dissolves Clement's Cabinet—Prince Alexander's return—Stambuloff's sleep, and the consequences—The telegram to the Czar, and its answer—*Punica fides* of Russian Agents—Prince Alexander's final departure.

TO seek the motives which rendered it possible for the conspirators to kidnap Prince Alexander, and by which they were actuated in the first instance, it is necessary to go back to the camp at Slivniza. On the 18th November, Captain Bendereff had been strictly ordered by the Prince to act solely upon the defensive, but, seeing what he considered a favourable opportunity, he attacked one of the flanks and defeated them entirely, returning to his position much elated, and proud of his success. In the evening the officers were all assembled at "Headquarters," which was a miserable tavern, and were drinking and conversing over the day's fight. The scene which followed was recounted to me by an eye-witness. Major Petroff, the Chief of the Staff, reproached Bendereff with having disobeyed orders, adding that the Prince was very angry with him. Bendereff, flushed with wine and victory, retorted insolently, slapping his elbow

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with a well-known Bulgarian gesture of contempt, "The Prince knows no more about tactics than my arm." Just before the words were uttered the Prince himself had joined the group, and was silently looking on. He made no remark, but turned away, and went back to his tent. But when the campaign was over, and rewards were being distributed, he refused to decorate Bendereff with the Order for Valour, or to promote him from Captain to Major, as was done in the case of Petroff, Panoff, Grueff, and many others. This naturally aroused the bitter resentment of the slighted officer, who was always popularly considered as one of the most prominent heroes of the Servian campaign. He vowed vengeance, and at once entered into relations with Russia. Another measure, which alienated many of the more independent and ambitious spirits in the army, was the promulgation of an order taking away the power of promotion and reward from the department of the Minister of War, and vesting it in the person of the Prince and the Head of his Staff, Major Petroff, whose nepotism soon became a byword.

The malcontents rapidly increased in numbers, and in them the Russian Party found the willing and capable instruments which they had hitherto sought in vain. It is, however, not proved that official Russia had any cognisance of the plot, though, from the frequent overtures previously made by M. Koyander and others, the conspirators were sure of having the most complete approval from St. Petersburg if they succeeded.

It is curious to note on what small accidents the success or failure of such plans often rests, and the

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following facts are a striking illustration of this. Stambuloff was at Tirnovo all the summer, and on the 15th August he went to Rustchuk with the intention of making a prolonged tour in Europe for the benefit of his health. Had he carried out his intention, the future course of events would probably have been altogether different, but no sooner had he arrived than he received a telegram from a client, saying his case was coming on before the court on the 19th, and begging Stambuloff to come back and defend him. He therefore returned to Tirnovo, but he never defended his friend, as the court adjourned to the 23rd, and before then the *Coup d'état* had occurred. Whilst waiting in Tirnovo he received advice from one of his partisans, whose name I withhold, that he had seen a letter of serious import, and would like to talk to Stambuloff about it. Stambuloff told him to come at once, but he delayed until the 22nd. The letter was written by Velitchkoff, now Minister of Finance, to Madjâroff, present Minister of Ways and Communications. Velitchkoff was in Sofia, and Madjâroff was at Philippopolis, living next door to a warm Liberal. The letter detailed the plot for the abduction of the Prince, and was too compromising to be entrusted to the post. It was therefore sent by private hand. The messenger, who was strange to Philippopolis, went to the wrong house, and the door was opened by its mistress. He enquired if M. Madjâroff were at home. The lady replied that he was not, and asked him what he wanted. He foolishly said that he was the bearer of a letter from M. Velitchkoff, which he was to deliver personally. Madame —— carelessly said, "Oh! you can give it to

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me," and took it. She at once opened, read it, and communicated its tenour to the friend above-mentioned, her husband being away on service. She refused, however, to show him the letter for a day or two, and on this feminine caprice depended the abduction, since had Stambuloff perused the letter three days earlier he would have been able to defeat the plot. As it was, everything seemed to favour the scheme, which, it must be admitted, was laid with consummate skill. On the night of the 20th August, the Prince was surrounded in his palace, and forced, with revolvers pointed at his brow, to sign what purported to be his abdication.

On the morning of the 21st, before it was light, he was driven off to the Danube, where his own yacht was in waiting, hurried on board, and all steam was got up. It was a race for life for the conspirators, as should they fail in reaching Russian territory with the kidnapped Prince before the news of his whereabouts was known, it was almost certain they would be stopped. Orders were in fact given, too late, by the Roumanians to fire upon the yacht, but it had already passed. The excitement all over Europe was intense, and for two or three days nobody knew where the unfortunate Prince had been taken, the Bulgarians having, with tolerable success, cut off all communication, postal and telegraphic, with the outer world.

Meanwhile, the Principality was in a state of tumult, not easy to imagine, still less to describe.

It was on the 21st that Stambuloff received a telegram to the effect that the Prince was deposed, and giving

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a list of the members of a Provisional Government, amongst which were the names of Stambuloff himself, Stoiloff, and Grékoff. Refusing to believe the news, he replied, asking if it were serious, and summoning Karavéloff to the other end of the wire—it being the common habit in Bulgaria for the telegraph to be used, in emergencies, almost like a telephone. A reply came to the effect that Karavéloff was under arrest, upon which Stambuloff replied to Zankoff, who was at the other end, that he "recognized no Provisional Government, and would have neither part nor share in the doings of traitors, on whose accursed shoulders should rest the whole responsibility." Leaving Stambuloff for a moment to his reflections, we must turn to Sofia. As soon as the Prince was safely out of the town, the conspirators, by means of forged orders from the Minister of War, made themselves masters of the artillery, and as day was breaking, the rebels fired volleys in the air, to rouse the inhabitants. Zankoff, with a mob of his partizans, delivered a harangue before the Russian Agency, and M. Bogdânoff, in response, appeared at his window with the Metropolitan Clement, and made a speech, assuring them of Russian sympathy. This was listened to by the Zankoffists kneeling in the mud, and was supplemented next day by the placarding of the following telegram from St. Petersburg:

"As before, Russia will be actuated by heartfelt goodwill for the Bulgarians. The Imperial Government has no thoughts of an occupation, and will ever give their support to those Bulgarians who strive to maintain order and quiet in the country, so that its future well-being may be secured."

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Whether Russia considered that the party who had effected the disgraceful *Coup d'état* answered the description of the Bulgarians, to whom it would "ever give support," is not clear, but Zankoff and his crew evidently took it in this sense, and it was perfectly clear that Russia had not a word of blame for the conspiracy.

Being now in full possession of the town, the military seemed anxious to shift the *onus* of what had occurred, and still more so of what might soon happen, on to a Provisional Government. Telegrams had already been despatched all over the Principality, with the forged signatures of Karavéloff, Nikiforoff, Minister of War, and Stambuloff, but Karavéloff declined to join any new Government, and was confined to his house by a guard. The new Ministry was then formed as follows :—

President of the Council . .	THE METROPOLITAN CLEMENT.
Minister of Interior . . .	DRAGAN ZANKOFF.
,, Foreign Affairs .	CH. STOYANOFF.
,, War . . .	MAJOR NIKIFOROFF.
Minister of Finance . . .	TH. BOURMOFF.
,, Justice . . .	RADOSLAVOFF.
,, Education . .	VELITCHKOFF.
Commander-in-Chief of the Army	MAJOR GRUEFF,

who was head of the Military School and ringleader, together with Bendereff, in the plot which had just succeeded.

Over these names was published the following proclamation :

"To the Bulgarian Nation !

"To-day, at 2 o'clock a.m., Prince Alexander of Battenberg abdicated for ever the throne of Bulgaria, owing to his firm conviction that a continuation of his reign would only bring about the ruin of the Bulgarian

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people. In view of this event a Provisional Government has been formed, which, in assuming the direction of affairs until the meeting of the National Assembly, guarantees the life and honour of Bulgarians as well as foreigners, being convinced that the inhabitants of Bulgaria, without distinction of religion, race, or political opinions, will second our efforts in maintaining order.

"The Bulgarian people may be well assured that His Imperial Majesty the Czar, the Protector of Bulgaria, will not cease to afford his powerful aid and protection to our country. Long live the Bulgarian Nation! Vivat!"

This proclamation had not had time to reach Tirnovo before Stambuloff had launched his counter to it by telegram. Directly he had the first intimation of the *Coup d'état*, he called a meeting of his partisans, amongst whom was his old friend Slaveikoff. In fiery words he declared that there was not an hour to lose, and that an abyss was yawning before Bulgaria. He recapitulated all the trials the country had gone through in order to obtain their Prince, and the devotion Alexander had shown to his adopted people. Was all this to end in handing over Bulgaria to Russia, and were Bulgarians traitorously to perform what all Europe had in vain attempted? At least there was one who would never lend his name to such disgrace, and he called upon all true patriots to rally round him. His speech was greeted with acclamation, and a general meeting of the inhabitants was called. Here a tumultuous scene ensued, all shouting that they wished for Prince Alexander, and looked to Stambuloff to bring him back. Accordingly he sounded the officers, with the exception of Captain Boneff, whom he knew to be on the other side, and found them all ready to declare against the Provisional Government.

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He then drew up his counter-proclamation, as follows:

"In the name of Alexander I., Prince of Bulgaria, and of the National Assembly, I declare to be outlaws the Members of the Provisional Government, at the head of which is Clement, and anyone who obeys the orders of that Government shall be tried and punished by military law. I appoint Lieut.-Colonel Mutkûroff to be Commander-in-Chief of all the Bulgarian forces, and I order all the authorities of the country, both civil and military, to submit without attempting opposition. I appeal to the heroic people of Bulgaria to defend the throne and the country against the traitors who have tried to dethrone our heroic and well-beloved Prince. May God Almighty give us strength for the nation to defend its honour and rights, and the glory of our country and of our Prince, elected by itself. Bulgaria for ever!

"Long live the Prince of Bulgaria, Alexander I.!

(Signed) "STAMBULOFF,
"President of the National Assembly.

"MUTKUROFF,
"Lieut.-Colonel, Commander-in-Chief of the Bulgarian Forces."

This proclamation was telegraphed simultaneously to Philippopolis, where Colonel Mutkûroff commanded, and to Sofia, Stambuloff having taken forcible possession of the telegraph station at Tirnovo, in spite of Captain Boneff. At Philippopolis the whole of the troops were easily won over to the good cause. There was a moment of hesitation; but our Consul-General, Captain Jones, V.C., lost no time in calling upon Mutkûroff, and making a most forcible appeal to his honour not to take the oath of allegiance to traitors, but to stand by his Prince, soon persuaded him to declare against the Provisional Government. Mutkûroff promptly installed himself in the Philippopolis telegraph office, and soon learnt that

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Tirnovo, Plevna, and Haskeui had decided for the Prince; and further, that the Slivnitza Brigade had seized their disloyal officers, and were marching upon Sofia to demand the release of Major Popoff, their Commandant, who had been imprisoned by the conspirators. In Sofia, Major Panoff, Commandant-General of Artillery, an officer of tried energy and decision of character, recovered his command, and seized the Sofia telegraph, putting himself in immediate communication with Stambuloff at Tirnovo, where the small telegraph station became temporarily the seat of government. Their great anxiety was to avoid bloodshed between the troops; but it soon became apparent that the whole organisation of the conspiracy was broken up.

As soon as he spoke to Panoff, Stambuloff ordered him very concisely to "Dissolve the Provisional Government, and hold the town for the Prince as Commandant," which laconic instruction, with the help of Major Popoff, and a detachment of his 1st Regiment which had arrived from Slivnitza, he fulfilled with commendable alacrity. In this truly extraordinary fashion was a reigning Prince kidnapped out of his own palace, the whole of Bulgaria nominally placed under a Provisional Government in undisputed possession of the capital, and that same Government overthrown, without a single drop of blood being shed, or the slightest disorder taking place. The various proclamations by Stambuloff and his decisive assumption of power were stigmatized as unconstitutional, and may, perhaps, be considered as the first of many similar arbitrary measures taken by him, but, as President of the National Assembly, he

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declared himself the only legal representative of authority left in the land, and nothing but admiration can be felt for the firm and uncompromising loyalty he showed, as well as for the pure unselfishness of his actions, which were prompted by the cleanest patriotism, untainted with the least desire for self-glorification.

Having turned out the famous Provisional Government, a Regency was declared, consisting of Karavéloff, Stambuloff, and Nikiforoff, with Radoslavoff as Minister of Interior, and Stoiloff of Foreign Affairs, to last until they could find and bring back the Prince. Stambuloff consented to this only under reserves, as regarded Karavéloff, but his whole attention was directed firstly to discovering the whereabouts of Prince Alexander. An amusing exchange of telegrams, which would have been comical, had not the issues at stake been so grave, was now going on all over Europe, and it finally transpired that the Prince had been landed at Reni, on Russian territory, and forwarded by the Russian authorities to the frontier at Lemberg, where he was set at liberty. On learning this, Stambuloff despatched a telegram to His Highness, of which no copy seems to have been kept, saying that the whole of Bulgaria was longing for his return, and entreating him to come and take back the crown, which he, Stambuloff, was holding for him. The Prince resolved, without hesitation, to accept, and passing through Vienna, where he was joined by Natchevitch, now Minister for Foreign Affairs, steamed down the Danube to Rustchuk. The promptness of his reply to the appeal relieved Stambuloff's mind of a great weight, as Russia had already signified her intention of sending

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Prince Dolgorouky as Imperial Commissioner, and it became a race as to which should arrive first. Had Prince Alexander delayed, and Prince Dolgorouky anticipated him, the return would have been beset with manifold difficulties and dangers, if it would not have become impossible. By the arrival of Prince Alexander, though, the presence of an Imperial Commissioner became unnecessary, at least from a Bulgarian point of view.*

The feelings of M. Stambuloff as the yacht steamed up to the Rustchuk landing-stage must have been indeed enviable, and the meeting between him and the Prince was affecting in the extreme, for it was Stambuloff, and he alone, who had saved for Prince Alexander what was dearer than his life—his honour—and had brought him back triumphantly to the palace from which he had been so ignominiously spirited away by a band of half-drunken cadets. In a few emotional sentences Stambuloff welcomed him back, told him that he had merely held the throne for him in his absence, and now begged to be allowed to retire for a while into private life, and enjoy a rest much needed, leaving him with a Cabinet ready formed, under Radoslâvoff. The Prince replied that no words could express, and no acts repay, the debt he and Bulgaria owed to Stambuloff, and he asked him to remain with him for a little longer at least. Such a request, at such

* Already, on the 26th, Stambuloff had been called up to the telegraph by M. Bogdânoff to listen to a message from the Emperor, stating his intention to send Prince Dolgorouky, and had replied that he declined to hold any communication with an associate of traitors, and, moreover, ordered the telegraph clerk to turn M. Bogdânoff out of the office, which he proceeded to do forthwith.

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a moment, was hard to refuse, and Stambuloff agreed to accompany the Prince as far as Sofia. Amongst the crowd on the shore assembled to greet the Prince, stood the Russian Consul, M. Shatokhin, in full uniform. This mark of attention flattered the exile immensely, and roused again a feeble hope that he might yet reconcile himself with the Czar. In the course of a short conversation with Stambuloff, he even expressed his pleasure at the prospect of having Prince Dolgorouky sent as Imperial Commissioner, but was met with a blunt reply that there was no longer any need for Russian Commissioners in Bulgaria.

Then Stambuloff held a brief consultation with Radoslâvoff, Natchevitch, and others, and, scarcely having slept for five days and nights, withdrew to his own apartments to rest with a happy sense of having accomplished his task. And he slept a heavy, unbroken slumber for fourteen hours, during which an irrevocable error was committed in secret by the Prince.

For whilst the watch-dog slept, Shatokhin, in his uniform, called upon Prince Alexander, and induced him to write and despatch a telegram to the Czar, so worded as to lay him open to the crushing rejoinder which followed. What hidden motives can have dictated this colossal blunder no man can tell. It was probably a sense of its enormity which prompted him to conceal the fact of its having been written, even from Stambuloff. I give the text of it in full:—

"Sire, having resumed the government of my country, I venture to offer your Imperial Majesty my most respectful thanks for the action of your Imperial Majesty's repre-

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sentative at Rustchuk, who showed the Bulgarian people, by his official presence at my reception, that the Imperial Government could not approve the revolutionary act of which I was the victim.

"At the same time, I beg permission to express to your Imperial Majesty my deep gratitude for the mission of General Prince Dolgorouky, Envoy Extraordinary of your Imperial Majesty, for my first act in resuming my legitimate authority, is to announce to your Imperial Majesty my firm intention to spare no sacrifice, in order to aid your Imperial Majesty's magnanimous intention to terminate the present grave crisis through which Bulgaria is passing.

"I beg your Imperial Majesty to authorise Prince Dolgorouky to come to a direct understanding with me, as soon as possible, and I shall be happy to be able to give your Imperial Majesty decisive proof of my unalterable devotion to your august person. The principle of Monarchy has compelled me to re-establish a legal government in Bulgaria and Roumelia. Russia gave me my crown: I am ready to return it into the hands of her Sovereign."

The most plausible explanation of this humiliating prayer for protection, addressed to the very Power which had been the active agent in the shameful drama of which, as Prince Alexander said, he had been the victim, is that his nerves were unstrung by what he had gone through, and that he had already made up his mind to abdicate the Throne, unless he could obtain Russian recognition. It was in sheer desperation, therefore, that he must have resolved upon a last appeal to his implacable foe, backed by a decision, should it fail, to give up the unequal struggle. In writing it he must have been in woful ignorance of the light in which he was regarded in Russia, or he could never have debased himself

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so far as to court the insult he might have known would be inflicted upon him by the reply.*

The presence of Shatokhin in uniform could have been nothing more than a trap laid in order to inspire false hopes, and the incident is only a shade less degrading to Russia than to Prince Alexander.

After spending a day in Rustchuk in feasting and rejoicing, the party set off for Tirnovo in carriages, Stambuloff riding with the Prince, and the whole journey being a triumphal procession such as probably will never be seen again, every stoppage in the route being the signal for frenzied demonstrations of delight in honour of the recovered Sovereign, who, in addition to the victor's laurels, was now wearing in the eyes of his people a martyr's crown. During these days he seemed somewhat to revive in spirits, and to take a more hopeful view, being cheered by the demonstrations of devotion on all sides. A rude awakening, however, was in store from

* In a conversation with Sir Robert Morier, at St. Petersburg, who was endeavouring to plead the cause of Prince Alexander, M. de Giers said that "no idea could easily be formed of the intensity of the hatred animating every class of the Russian nation, from the highest to the lowest, against the Prince. "That unfortunate young man," he continued, "has become in the eyes of the Russian people the incarnation and embodiment of everything which most deeply stirs the national indignation. He represents, in the first place, the untold ingratitude of the Bulgarians towards their deliverers, and reminds them of the losses of blood and treasure incurred in a war which yielded no other results than disappointments. In the second place he reminds them of all the humiliations submitted to in the Constantinople Conference, and since. Lastly, he represents the hopes and desires of Russia's enemies Never, therefore, could there be peace between him and the Russian people."

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any dreams he may have cherished. Whilst sitting at table at Novi Zagora, a telegram was delivered to him, and as he read it his face blanched. He rose immediately, beckoning to Stambuloff to follow him into an adjoining room, and there, with tears flowing, he repeated the answer of the Czar. This was the sledge-hammer retort to his petition:

"Have received Your Highness' telegram. Cannot approve your return to Bulgaria, foreseeing disastrous consequences to country already so severely tried. The mission of Prince Dolgorouky is no longer desirable. I shall refrain from all interference with the sad state to which Bulgaria has been brought, as long as you remain there. Your Highness will judge what is your proper course. I reserve my decision as to my future action, which will be in conformity with the obligations imposed on me by the venerated memory of my father, the interests of Russia, and the peace of the East.

(Signed) "ALEXANDER."*

The hearing of such words came like a thunderbolt upon Stambuloff, who enquired what telegram was referred to in the opening line. The Prince then confessed his thoughtless action, and admitted to the full the enormity of his fault. At the same time he declared that it was quite impossible for him to think any more of remaining in Bulgaria. Stambuloff, although he could not fail to see the difficulty of the situation, refused to listen to any idea of abdication, and insisted upon Prince Alexander's continuance on his path. The Prince

* This telegram was a fitting close to the part played by Russia towards Prince Alexander, a part which in history must always remain the greatest blot upon the memory of Alexander the Peacemaker.

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passively allowed himself to be overcome so far as to agree to go on to Sofia, but all the joy and triumph had vanished, and the reception at Sofia, where the contents of the fatal telegram had preceded them, though touching and hearty, entirely lacked anything like enthusiasm.

The first thing Stambuloff did upon his arrival in Sofia was to call Karavéloff severely to account. Various facts which had leaked out seemed to leave small doubt but that he had had knowledge of the plot, and if he had declined to openly join the Provisional Government, it was only from natural caution, and a mistrust as to the assured success of the *Coup*. Stambuloff demanded of him how he could have allowed the Prince to be stolen away "from under his nose, as it were," and refused to accept Karavéloff's excuse, that it was through no fault of his. The interview closed by Stambuloff's remark, "Either you are a traitor, or unfit to be trusted with the Government. Our old friendship ceases from to-day. We may be forced to work together, but I no longer can consider you as one of my party." His efforts to induce Prince Alexander to remain were met with a melancholy persistency in the resolve already taken. The Prince declared that his confidence had been shaken past remedy in the Army, which, it was true, now seemed to be loyal, but which might at any moment turn against him once more. It was the Liberals, who had systematically opposed him, who had restored to him his throne, and the Conservatives had gone over to Russia. Finally the telegram from the Czar had put the finishing-stroke to his hopes, and he would go:—perhaps then Russia might have for Bulgaria the pity which she refused to him.

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Stambuloff used every imaginable argument to convince his Sovereign, urging upon him that he and the Liberals had risked their all to bring him back, and if he left them now he would be exposing them to the gravest perils. Both humanity and honour called upon him not to desert, but to share the fate of his friends and his people.

Nothing prevailed however, and seeing persuasion useless, Stambuloff decided to try what threats would effect. The Prince having summoned a meeting of the Diplomatic Corps and leading Bulgarians, and declared his fixed resolve to resign, Stambuloff categorically informed him that he would not be allowed to leave. He enquired on what grounds he would be detained, or on what grounds he would be permitted to depart. The answer given was that the only condition on which permission could be granted was that a formal engagement should be entered into by Russia, that within the delay prescribed by the Constitution, Bulgaria should be allowed to elect another Prince. Thereupon Alexander visited MM. Bogdânoff and Kartzoff, and obtained from them a verbal promise to this effect. In fact, they were probably prepared to promise anything and everything, verbally or in writing, in order to get rid of him. With their promise in his ears, the Prince came back relieved, if not rejoicing, to Stambuloff. He, however, objected that a verbal promise from Bogdânoff meant nothing, but the Prince indignantly denied the possibility of Russia's going back from her word, given solemnly by her accredited Agents under such circumstances, and refused, point-blank, to demand any written document. With this assurance Stambuloff had to make believe to be content, although he was far

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from being so in reality, but he, too, felt that the strain had arrived at breaking point, and after the Prince had publicly announced his intention to resign, he had better do so. Another meeting of officers and notables was held on the 6th September, and it was decided to let him go, the departure being fixed for the 8th. On the 7th he published a manifesto announcing his abdication, and appointing a Regency composed of Stambuloff, Karavéloff, and Colonel Mutkûroff. Before accepting the post Stambuloff summoned his fellow Regents, and all the heads of parties, to meet him in the Assembly Room, and there he took their sacred word of honour to support the Regency loyally up till the time of the election of a new Prince.

Then came the last scene of the drama. In the Palace were drawn up all the Corps Diplomatique, with their ladies, the officers of the higher grades, and the Bulgarian notables with their wives. At half-past eleven Prince Alexander, dressed in full uniform, came into the audience chamber. The appearance of the fine soldierly figure, and kindly handsome face, which all knew and loved so well, was the signal for a complete silence. Then, in a pathetic and dignified speech, the Prince explained the motives which had led him to take the step he had taken. He said that he had returned to Bulgaria so that he might leave it in the light of day, instead of being dragged, like a malefactor, through the streets by dead of night, and also that he might leave as a friend, rather than as an enemy, of his country. His action was a proof of his sincere desire for the real welfare of the country, and showed his personal

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disinterestedness. He had devoted himself entirely to the interests of Bulgaria during the seven years he had been in the country, and if he had not succeeded, his failure was, perhaps, due partly to his youth and inexperience, and partly to the ignorance of those whom he had to call to his assistance in governing. He sincerely hoped that his successor might be more fortunate. Whoever he might be, he would meet with very great difficulties, and he certainly could not devote himself more completely to the interests of Bulgaria than he had done. "It was the Protocol of Constantinople that had broken his back, and had given the Opposition an opportunity of working against him, by the fact of his having been appointed a Turkish functionary. He had used all his efforts to oppose this measure, but it was not possible for one man alone to stand against Europe."* He then took formal leave of most of those present, and withdrew. At four o'clock, a smaller private reception was held for his intimate friends. The scene was one which those who saw will never forget. A heart of stone could not have resisted unmoved the spectacle of the farewells between the beloved and persecuted Prince, and the leaders of his people, whom he was leaving. The Prince passed through this trying ordeal with truly royal grace and dignity, and his was, perhaps, the only dry eye in the room.

Outside, a long line of carriages was drawn up, many of the notables wishing to accompany the royal traveller for some distance on his road across the Balkans. In the first carriage he took his seat with Stambuloff, and they

* *Blue Book, Turkey*, No. 1, 1887, p. 149.

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drove through the town, and far out on the Lom Palanka road, through a living hedge of weeping men and women. A more moving scene can scarcely be pictured. As they reached the summit of Yeni-Khàn, from whence the last view of Sofia is to be obtained, the Prince turned and bid farewell to his capital, adding, "I shall never look upon you again."

By degrees, though, as they advanced on their way, his spirits rose, for he felt himself free once more from the crushing cares and responsibilities of State, and free for ever this time, and before they reached Lom Palanka he was quite gay. Stambuloff accompanied him on the yacht as far as Turn-Severin, and then took his last leave of the master he had served so well, and returned to take up the burden which had been too heavy for Alexander of Battenberg.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE REGENCY.

General Kaulbars arrives—His twelve pieces of advice—Stambuloff insists on a Candidate for the Throne—Kaulbars addresses the crowd—He makes an electoral tour—A revolt at Bourgas—Prince Valdemar is offered the Throne—General Kaulbars leaves Bulgaria with all the Russian Consular Officials—The plot of the Yunkers—The Silistria revolt—The Rustchuk revolt—Execution of Panoff—Ministerial plot against the Regents—The Throne is offered to King Charles of Roumania—How Prince Ferdinand was found—His election by the Assembly—He lands at Sistoff.

STAMBULOFF'S reflections, as he drove back across the Balkans, cannot have been otherwise than gloomy. The entire work of the past few years would have to be done over again, and in the face of the undisguised enmity of Russia, with a partially disaffected army, an opposition sure of Russian support, and a Co-Regent whom he more than suspected of treachery. Since the day when the little band of outlaws hid their tattered flags and arms in a cave, the future of Bulgaria had rarely looked so dark. During the past ten years the son of the Tirnovo hotel-keeper had passed through more varied experiences than fall to the lot of most men in a lifetime, and now at the age of thirty-two he was in the proud position of Regent. He has often spoken to me of that solitary journey from Lom to Sofia, and

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assured me that, far from feeling any exultation, he was almost inclined to resign the honours, together with the dangers, of his position, and retire to his beloved Tirnovo. It was only from a sense of the highest patriotism, and from a conviction that, if he flinched at this crisis, Russia would find nobody else to stand in her way, that he persuaded himself to enter upon what he foresaw would be an endless struggle. As soon as he got back to Sofia he called upon MM. Kartzoff and Neklûdoff, who had been newly sent out to take the place of Bogdânoff, to enquire of them if they would formally ratify the promises made by them to Prince Alexander. They denied that they had ever given any assurances whatever to the Prince concerning Russia's consent to the election of a successor, and declared that if Alexander had represented them as having done so, he had deceived the Regents. On the contrary, Russia did not consider that Bulgaria was yet ripe, or sufficiently calmed down from recent excitements, to proceed with such an election. Stambuloff passionately retorted that he had foreseen at the time some such *mala fides*, and that he was certain that the assurance had been given to the Prince. So they parted with high words, and the gulf grew wider. Directly after this, it was announced that the Emperor was sending a Special Commissioner to assist the Bulgarians in the election of a Prince. The mission seemed scarcely to agree with the assertions of Neklûdoff, but the Regents were accustomed to contradictory words and acts from Russia, and awaited the arrival of the new Commissioner with curiosity and impatience. The official chosen was General Kaulbars, Military Attaché at Vienna,

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and he arrived at Lom Palanka on the 25th September, 1886. Scarcely had he set foot on Bulgarian soil when he composed a series of twelve pieces of "advice" to Bulgaria, which he published in the form of a circular, addressed to the Russian Consuls and Vice Consuls. The three principal points in this document were that the elections were to be postponed for two months (whereas the Constitution provided that they should be held within one month after the vacation of the throne), that the state of siege should be raised, and that all officers and other prisoners implicated in the recent plot should be liberated. The reasons alleged for these demands were, firstly, that the country must quiet down before it could hold elections; secondly, that in order to allow it to do so, the state of siege must be raised; and thirdly, the prisoners being accused of a party crime could not be properly or justly tried by their political adversaries.

The Regents took no notice of this "advice," but it clearly showed them what they might expect from the new Commissioner.

As soon as he arrived in Sofia, he embodied these three points in an official note to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Natchevitch, with a preface that he had been instructed to do so by the Emperor. He also openly boasted that he would soon put an end to the Regency, which he at once attacked, on the ground that neither Stambuloff nor Mutkûroff were properly qualified for the post of Regent, according to the Constitution, which declared the Regents must be men who had either held portfolios, or sat in the High Court of Appeal. His contention was technically sound, but as the Regents

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had already been acknowledged by the Chamber, it was rather late to object to them; and, furthermore, his own letters of credit were addressed to the Regency, thereby admitting its legality. In effect, he soon abandoned his objection, and himself was the first to call upon Stambuloff, who, though one of three Regents, was recognised as being virtually alone, Colonel Mutkûroff having his hands full with the Army, and Karavéloff being utterly discredited since the Commission of Enquiry into the *Coup d'état*, which had so clearly proved his guilty knowledge, that there was already a question of trying him, together with his colleagues, Major Nikiforoff, former Minister of War, and Tsanoff, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Stambuloff began by asking him who Russia's candidate might be, as the first thing to be done was to place a Prince on the throne, and he understood that Kaulbars had come specially to aid them towards this end. The General replied that he had no candidate, but that before talking about a new Prince the state of siege must be raised, and the imprisoned officers must be released. Stambuloff said that since Prince Alexander himself had said he wished no vengeance to be taken, he had no particular objection, in principle, to the General's proposals; but he must have a candidate, and that quickly. Kaulbars could only repeat that, as yet, he was without instructions. In a day or two Stambuloff returned his visit, and a week later Kaulbars called a second time, saying that he had good news from Russia. Stambuloff was in hopes he was going to propose a Prince, and was disappointed when he was shown a telegram saying the Emperor had no desire to touch the Bulgarian Constitution. He

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simply said that nobody had any right to touch the Constitution, which had been signed, at Tirnovo, collectively by the Representatives of all the Great Powers. This show of independence shocked General Kaulbars, for whom the will and even the name of the Czar was a sacred thing, and when Stambuloff returned to the charge on the question of a Prince, he rather sulkily declared that Russia had no candidate. Stambuloff then emphatically blurted out that it was perfectly evident that if they waited for Russia to give them a candidate they would never have another Prince, as Kaulbars clearly did not wish to see the throne occupied. This being so, they would find one for themselves. Having convinced himself that he could do nothing with the Regent, General Kaulbars began to enter into negotiations with Zankoff* and the remaining Russophils.

This party was not so strong as it tried to make the world believe, for the masses were heartily sick of the bullying to which they were systematically subjected, and expected to be thankful for, and when it became generally known that General Kaulbars was, in the name of Russia, using every effort to defer the elections, mass meetings were held in all the towns, and even villages, where resolutions were passed, demanding the fixing of a date forthwith.

At Sofia some five or six thousand assembled in the

* An amusing interview took place about this time between Sir Frank Lascelles and Zankoff, who, to the great astonishment of our Diplomatic Agent, presented himself uninvited one morning, and began the conversation by saying the thanks of Bulgaria were due to Sir Frank, for having supported the Prince in the line he had taken, since it had led to his expulsion from the country, which was a great blessing.

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Square, on October 3rd, and violent speeches were made against the meddling of Russia in Bulgaria's internal affairs. In the middle of the proceedings, to the amazement of the crowd, General Kaulbars appeared, pushed his way to the front, and commenced to address the meeting in Russian. He said the Czar loved Bulgaria, and went on with the usual commonplaces; but when he touched upon the postponement of the elections, and the mob understood what he was saying, his voice was drowned in cries of "Long live the Constitution!" "Down with Russia!" and he was forced to beat a hasty retreat. His presence at this mob meeting, if it showed an utter disregard of diplomatic usage, at least proved his personal courage, for it was an open incitement to violence against his person, and it is certain that had any been used, Russia would have seized upon it as a pretext, although it may be doubted if, by his own action, he had not forfeited for the time being the usual diplomatic immunities. The next day he started on his famous electoral tour. The truth was that he had been met at every step by disillusions. The original Russian contention had been that the only obstacle in the way of a reconciliation between the two countries was the person of Prince Alexander of Battenberg. He having disappeared, General Kaulbars found that the populace of Sofia was evidently hostile to him, and therefore he was reduced to trying to prove that even if the Government and the Bulgarians of the capital would not hear of Russian control, still the mass of the nation was in favour of submission to Russia. His tour, unfortunately, demonstrated quite the contrary.

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On the eve of his departure Stambuloff visited him, and tried to dissuade him from a proceeding so little in keeping with his dignity as the representative of the Emperor. Flying into a passion, the General replied that he was acting under the direct orders of the Czar. The proclamations for elections on the 10th October having already been issued, Kaulbars enquired whether they intended, in the Grand Sobranieh, to put forward the candidature of Prince Alexander, or any of his family? Stambuloff frankly answered that the Bulgarians had no thought of such a proposal, and he asked him, for the last time, if Prince Valdemar of Denmark was the Russian nominee? General Kaulbars replied that he must maintain his former answer, that he had no instructions to propose one candidate or another, but that he was considerably relieved by Stambuloff's statement that there was no idea of bringing back Prince Alexander. Taking advantage of this sentiment, Stambuloff again urged upon him not to undertake his tour, being seriously alarmed lest, in the present state of popular feeling, some harm should come to him. The General, however, who knew no personal fear, and was obstinate past description, would not listen to any arguments, and started forthwith. As might have been expected, his journey was a succession of disappointments. At almost every stoppage he was hissed and hooted, and at Shumla and Varna the police and troops had to be called in to protect him from violence. It was only at Vratza and Biela Slatina that he prevailed upon the inhabitants to abstain from voting, and sending representatives to the Grand Sobranieh. Out of eighty *arrondissements*, these were the only two which did

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not elect members. The elections resulted in an overwhelming majority for the National party, with Stambuloff at its head, the Zankoffists only securing six seats. At Sofia, Karavéloff only received twenty-seven votes, and his name was formally struck off the lists of the National party. The impotent rage of General Kaulbars at this result vented itself in a series of protests and threats, of which the Government took meagre notice. Amongst other measures, two Russian warships were sent to Varna, and remained there for some time, but as Stambuloff gave the strictest orders that no sort of provocation was to be offered either to the ships or the Consulate, and that, if necessary, troops should even be allowed to land unopposed, they finally steamed away. The officers of the army were also approached with alternate promise and menace to the effect that, when Russia occupied the country, those who aided her cause would be promoted, whilst those who opposed it would be sent to Siberia. The most weak-minded lent a half-willing ear to these tales, but the tougher spirits rejected them utterly. At this stage a conspiracy broke out at Bourgas, headed by the notorious Captain Nabôkoff, who suborned a portion of the garrison, arrested the Prefect, and proclaimed himself master of the town. Stambuloff at once ordered Captain Panitza to proceed thither, with full powers to suppress the revolt, but before he could arrive upon the scene the loyal troops had already gained the upper hand, reinstated the Prefect, and taken prisoner Nabôkoff, who was summarily condemned to death. Upon the violent remonstrances of General Kaulbars, however, and in order to avoid complications, this arch

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conspirator was handed over to his Consul, and shipped back to Odessa.

Meanwhile the Grand Sobranieh had met; and provisionally elected Prince Valdemar, of Denmark, in spite of the declaration of General Kaulbars, that the elections having been held without the consent of Russia, they were illegal; consequently the Chamber itself was illegally constituted, and any decisions it might take would, *de facto*, be *nuls et non avenus*. How far such a simple declaration had the force of invalidating the elections, and the acts of the Chamber, which otherwise had been perfectly legally convoked, is open to question; but it was on this ground that Russia refused to recognise its deliberations, and on this ground alone that she has persistently refused, ever since, to acknowledge the election of Prince Ferdinand.

In voting for Prince Valdemar, the Assembly hoped to force the hand of Russia to recognise a relative of the Emperor. They plainly did not know the character of Alexander, the Peacemaker. A telegram was sent to Prince Valdemar's father, acquainting him of the decision of the Assembly; and reckoning in a great degree upon the support of the Empress, who, it was known, would have liked her brother to occupy the throne, they awaited the answer, not without some hope. In two days' time it came, saying that, not having the approval of the Czar, Prince Valdemar must decline the honour. With no other candidate to the front, the Assembly was bound to dissolve, but before doing so, they elected a Commission, consisting of MM. Grékoff, Stoiloff, and Kaltcheff, who were entrusted with the duty of visiting the various

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European Courts in search of a Prince, and begging for the support of each in their endeavours. After this the Assembly dissolved, and Stambuloff, with Natchevitch and several other leading men, left Tirnovo to visit the Danube towns, where a certain amount of disaffection, especially amongst the garrisons, was rumoured to exist.

Whilst they were travelling, an incident occurred at Philippopolis, the Cavass of the Russian Consulate having been, as it was alleged, assaulted by the police. General Kaulbars, in his best style, instantly demanded full satisfaction, including the dismissal of the Prefect and of the Commandant of Police. Stambuloff replied, from Rustchuk, that he must first verify the facts, and if, after enquiry, the accusation was proved, he was ready to give an indemnity. After sending this answer, he started for Lom Palanka, having sent orders to Philippopolis for a searching examination into the case. General Kaulbars, however, was not content with the reply, and telegraphed that if the whole satisfaction he had demanded were not given in twenty-four hours, he would leave Bulgaria. Owing, however, to a tremendous storm, succeeded by a heavy fog, the travellers were delayed on the road, and Kaulbars' ultimatum was only handed to Stambuloff after the delay had expired. The General had, nevertheless, been as good as his word, and when the time had passed, he, with all the Russian Consular officers in the Principality, departed *en masse*. The accident of a fog thus rendered yeoman service, and Stambuloff on learning the Russian exodus felt that the country had been thereby delivered from a dangerous element, since the whole of the Czar's

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officials had been ceaselessly employed in fostering sedition from the day of their arrival.

To go back for a week or two. When the Russian ships were before Varna, in the month of October, Stambuloff telegraphed to Zankoff that he did not care to fight Russia alone, and he would resign if they would form a new Regency, consisting of the heads of the three Parties —the Zankoffists, the Nationalists, and the Conservatives. Zankoff answered, "Hand in your resignation first, and give over the power to Kaulbars." This, however, was too complete a surrender, and Stambuloff therefore called upon the Assembly to elect a new Regent in the room of Karavéloff, who had resigned when he found his position no longer tenable. The Assembly thereupon accepted the resignation of Karavéloff, and elected, on Stambuloff's proposal, M. Givkoff, who, with Stambuloff and Mutkûroff took up residence at Sofia, after the dissolution of the Assembly, at the "Hôtel Bulgarie." The next six months were spent by Stambuloff seated, as it were, upon a volcano.

At Constantinople Zankoff was using every means to overturn the Regency, and was promising the Grand Vizier to come to a thorough agreement with Russia if only Turkey would accept his programme, the first article of which was the suppression of the Regency, and the formation of a Zankoff Ministry, assisted by Russian officers.*

* This may be a fitting place to sketch the career of Zankoff. In the beginning he was one of the most prominent champions of Bulgarian independence, and was the most vigorous opponent of Prince Alexander, up to 1883, in his attempts to modify and change the Constitution. In that year, however, the Prince called him to office, to take the place of the dismissed Russian Cabinet, and he at once expressed his readiness to fall in with any alterations which His Highness might choose to make. Karavéloff, who was gradually

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In Bulgaria plot succeeded plot, and he scarcely knew on whom he could rely. It was almost a single-handed fight, and he was enabled to carry it on only by adroitly profiting by the weakness and disorganisation of his adversaries, and by the exercise of sleepless watchfulness and untiring energy. It would require a small volume to go into the details of each of the separate conspiracies discovered and defeated in turn, but a rapid sketch of some of them will give an idea of the perils of the situation of Regent.

Almost as soon as the three Regents had taken up their residence in the Hotel, on the 23rd November, whilst sitting at lunch together, a soldier asked to see Givkoff. This man had formerly been a schoolmaster at Varna, when Givkoff was Inspector of Schools for that district. He was now a "yunker" in the Military School. He said that the "yunkers," who had already distinguished themselves by the kidnapping of Prince Alexander, had arranged to surround the Hotel on the 25th, and massacre the Regency. He had escaped by a window from the school, and procuring a suit of civilian

assuming the leadership of the more advanced Liberals, and who enjoyed the usual support given indiscriminately by Russia to any Party which was in opposition, took advantage of this change of front in Zankoff to attack him, and finally succeeded in turning him out. As a natural consequence, Russian countenance was now transferred to Zankoff, who was full of wrath against Karavéloff and Stambuloff, and from this date (1884) never ceased actively conspiring against the Nationalist Party. His rôle in the events immediately succeeding the *Coup d'état* alienated many sympathies from him, and by the proposals just quoted, made to Turkey, he threw off all pretence of patriotism, and was never more seriously regarded as aught else but a salaried Russian agitator.

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clothes, had come, for the sake of old kindness shewn to him by Givkoff, to give him timely warning. The plot was the more dangerous, as it was organised by a band of young desperadoes who had already the necessary experience. The ringleaders were Major Panoff, who had behaved well on the former occasion, and the Commandant of the School, Hessapdjieff. The Regents at once summoned Major Popoff, Commandant of Sofia, and Colonel Nikolaieff, Minister of War. It was rapidly decided that the 1st Regiment was to surround the School at one o'clock next morning, and to seize all the arms and munitions, making the "yunkers" prisoners. Stambuloff asked to be allowed to arrest Panoff himself, and towards midnight went to his private residence. There he was told that Panoff was at the Military School, and he sent the orderly to fetch him instantly. As the plot was not to be executed for two or three days, and the conspirators had no idea they were betrayed, Panoff unsuspectingly obeyed the summons of the Regent. Stambuloff encouraged him to talk and drink, and kept him at home till four a.m., when he returned to his own house. At six Panoff arrived, and broke into his room in a state of the greatest excitement, crying, "What have you done to me?"

"I have saved you from being a traitor, for the sake of our boyhood's friendship," was the answer; "but you cannot any longer remain in the army, for I am not the only one who knows of your shame." And his name was immediately struck off the rolls. We shall meet him again before long.

On the 29th February, 1887, came a telegram that the

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garrison of Silistria had revolted, and information poured in from all sides that a general rising was in preparation along the Danube. The conspirators were in active communication with ex-Captains Grueff and Bendereff, and with the Russian Agency at Bucharest, which, under M. Hitrovo, had become the headquarters of the revolutionists, and it was apparent that prompt measures would have to be taken.

At Silistria, the telegraph clerk, whilst sending messages under compulsion to the Russian conspirators in Bucharest, contrived to wire off a message to Rustchuk, giving the Prefect news of what had happened. A battalion was at once despatched to the scene from Rustchuk, and another, with cavalry, from Varna, but before this force reached Silistria, the troops themselves had seized and shot their revolted leader, Captain Chrestoff, and this was the only blood shed. The abortive attempt, however, served to arouse the vigilance of the Government, which was tolerably well prepared for the 3rd March, the anniversary of the Treaty of San Stefano, which had been chosen by the Russian leaders of the revolutionists as an appropriate day to raise their standards. Rustchuk was the spot fixed upon, as being most conveniently situated for communications with Bucharest, and at three o'clock in the morning, the regiment of sappers sallied forth from their barracks and occupied the Prefecture, which stands over against the infantry barracks. They were commanded by Captain Ouzûnoff, the gallant defender of Widdin, during the Servian War, who, like so many of his fellow-officers, had allowed himself to be corrupted by the insidious advances of Russia. They summoned

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the infantry to surrender, but the latter, though very few in number, refused, and opened fire from their windows upon the sappers.

The rebels had begun operations by cutting all the town telegraph wires, but the Prefect had succeeded in sending a message to Sofia from the railway station, and believed that if he could hold the town for a day, relief would come. He, therefore, called for volunteers, who responded gallantly, and putting a gunsmith's shop to the sack, the civilians engaged in a pitched battle with the sappers.* They were encouraged by the stout resistance made by Captain Vulkoff, in the infantry barracks, and gradually the sappers found themselves getting the worst of the fight between two fires.†

* At Sofia, the first inkling of what was going on, was gathered from the fact that when the telegraph called Rustchuk at ten o'clock in the morning, no answer was returned. The Regents then went to the station and commenced telegraphing in all directions, particularly to Roumania, for information, and it was only at four in the afternoon that they heard that fighting was still going on, whereupon they despatched urgent orders for troops to hurry up from Razgrad, Plevna, and Tirnovo.

† Several most exciting incidents occurred during that afternoon. Not the least so was the meeting of the brothers Mateef. One of them was a captain in the rebel pioneers, the other was the Rustchuk station-master. Twice they met face to face, and twice they stayed their hands. Afterwards, when the sappers were dispersed, Captain Mateef, in full uniform with his heavy boots on, threw himself into the Danube, which was running in flood and covered with drifting ice, and performed the almost incredible feat of swimming across to the island which lies over against Rustchuk. As he clambered up among the osiers he was shot from the bank. Stambuloff was struck with admiration when he heard the story, and declared that if Mateef had escaped he would have granted him a free pardon for his gallant swim.

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In the afternoon they gave way altogether, and fled precipitately for the Danube, in order to try to reach the Roumanian shore; knowing well the fate in store for them, if captured. The boats were instantly subjected to a heavy fire from the victorious townspeople, and the steamer, *Golubchik*, started in pursuit. Amongst the prisoners were found ex-Major Panoff and a civilian, who, making sure of the victory of the sappers, had embarked from Giurgevo in a rowing boat, and were caught before they found out their mistake. Captain Bendereff was more lucky, and effected his escape, at least so it was reported. The National Guard from Razgrad arrived in the evening, and it shows the spirit of the people that they refused to believe the telegrams which reached Razgrad saying there was no need of their presence, and insisted on seeing for themselves. The manner in which the populace behaved on this occasion was an immense encouragement to the Regency, and they felt that every successive failure in revolt only strengthened their hold on the national sympathies.

As a consequence of the Rustchuk revolt the nine ring-leaders, amongst whom was the ill-fated Panoff, were shot, and at Sofia several prominent suspects were thrown into prison, under suspicion of having been concerned in the general plot. Karavéloff, Nikiforoff, Tsanoff, and Zankoff's son-in-law, Ludskânoff, were all implicated. As soon as they were confined, Mesdames Karavéloff and Ludskânoff petitioned the foreign Agents to intercede on behalf of their husbands, who, they alleged, were being tortured and subjected to hard-usage. Stambuloff was most indignant at this charge, and ordered the fullest

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enquiry to be made, which resulted in the publication of an official report, signed by the prisoners themselves, denying *in toto* that they had suffered any maltreatment. About a fortnight later they were all released, and the Regents made a tour through Roumelia, where they found no traces of the disaffection which had existed in the north. In April, Stambuloff was attacked again by his old enemy, pneumonia, but having received private news from Sofia that Colonel Nikolaieff, Minister of War, and Radoslâvoff, President of the Council, were plotting to turn out the Regency, ill as he was, he started full speed from Silistria, where he was laid up, reaching the already historical "Hôtel de Bulgarie" at the end of May. Here he found that, monstrous as it had appeared to him, the accusation was well-founded. There had been many *pourparlers* going on for the re-election of Prince Alexander, and the idea of the conspirators, who were impatient at the manner in which Stambuloff was allowing himself to be influenced by the prudent counsels of the Powers, seems to have been to overturn the Regency, and declare for Alexander. There are no documents on this subject, but from what I gathered, both from Stambuloff himself, and other actors in the event, what happened was as follows.

On the first of June, Stambuloff invited several officers and friends to dinner, and afterwards sent for Mutkûroff, under the pretence that his mother was ill. A carriage was in readiness outside to take him to Philippopolis, and Stambuloff instructed him to make all speed, and assure himself of the loyalty of the Eastern Roumelian troops. Mutkûroff having been safely despatched, the company

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was kept up carousing till three in the morning, when the third Regent, Givkoff, started for Lom and Rustchuk to raise the army of the Danube. The next day, on a plea of headache, Stambuloff refused to receive the Ministers, but the third morning, when a telegram in cypher from Mutkûroff had reached him, saying that the whole army of the South was in his hands, he convoked a council. When they had met, he told them that he was alone to speak to them, because one of his colleagues was at Philippopolis, and the other at Lom, whither they had gone in order to make sure of the preservation of peace and order. Radoslâvoff declared this was a lie, as he had seen Mutkûroff's hat in the hall. "Mutkûroff has more than one hat," replied Stambuloff. Nikolaieff broke out into oaths, and swore that he would court-martial Mutkûroff for leaving Sofia without permission from himself, as War Minister. He was, however, sternly rebuked by Stambuloff, who advised him to do nothing rash, adding significantly, "or I will show you that I am strong enough now, as before, to deal with traitors."

For State reasons, however, Stambuloff did not take any further steps, contenting himself with the little lesson he had given the Ministry. But he had also learnt one himself, and it was daily becoming more and more clear that they must elect a Prince. The Porte had, through Gadban Effendi, proposed the Prince of Mingrelia, but his was a candidature which Stambuloff would not hear of.*

* The answer Stambuloff made was, that he was not the sort of Prince they wanted, because he was a Caucasian, and probably a Circassian; and by the Treaty of Berlin, Circassians were not tolerated in Bulgaria. The real reason was, that he was considered as a mere puppet of Russia.

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Later on, the throne was offered to King Charles, of Roumania, through the intermediary of the Russian Consul at Rustchuk, and his was a candidature which, Stambuloff considered would fulfil every requirement of the situation, if His Majesty could only be prevailed upon to agree to it. He has never, to the present day, ceased regretting that King Charles was prevented, by consideration for the Powers, from accepting a position which would have lent double strength to both nations, and might have become the nucleus of a Balkan Confederation.

Having failed, however, all round, and seeing that his quondam friends and supporters were continually plotting against him and that the country could not hope to exist much longer without a Prince, he fixed the elections for the Grand National Assembly to elect one, in spite of the amicable remonstrances of all the Great Powers, and the maintenance by Russia of her original strong formal protest. The choice had already fallen upon Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, in this wise. When the three Bulgarian delegates reached Vienna, one of them, M. Kaltcheff, went to spend the evening at Ronacher's well-known circus. Here, at one of the marble-topped tables, he met a fellow countryman, a M. Kovâtcheff, who asked to introduce a retired officer to him, a certain Major Laaba. The Major, after the consumption of several bocks, remarked, "I hear you are in search of a Prince for Bulgaria. I have just the man for you." Kaltcheff, who is a simple-minded gentleman, was delighted at the chance, without reflecting upon the somewhat incongruous manner

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in which it was presented to him. So pleased was he, that though it was past two in the morning when he reached his hotel, he woke up MM. Grékoff and Stoiloff to tell them the good news. They laughed at him, and told him he might go alone to the Coburg Palace if he liked, but that they would certainly not accompany him. Nothing daunted, however, even after a night's meditation, M. Kaltcheff called upon the Prince next morning, and carried back an invitation to his colleagues. Seeing that it was serious, all three made their proposal, which the Prince accepted under the reserve that he should first be approved by all the Powers. This was in reality equivalent to a declining of the honour, and for a time no more was thought by the Bulgarians of Prince Ferdinand, although he appears to have begun his preparations from that moment. Later on, though, M. Mateef was sent to sound His Highness again on the subject, and, although Prince Ferdinand did not abandon his first position, Stambuloff decided to force his decision, in one sense or the other, by electing him.

The first business before the Assembly was to consider the resignation of the Regents and Ministry. It naturally refused to accept that of the Regents, and equally of course, the tainted Ministry was dismissed, and a new one formed under Dr. Stoiloff. The next act was the election of Prince Ferdinand, which was notified to him by telegram. He wired a reply, repeating that he would be proud to assume the sceptre if the Porte and Powers would recognise him. It was palpably absurd to hope for any such recognition, and a deputa-

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PRINCE FERDINAND.

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tion was sent to carry to His Highness the Act of the Assembly, in the hopes that they might persuade him to came back with them. He acknowledged the receipt of the Act in much the same terms as he had done the telegram. This did not suit Stambuloff, who, after some delay, decided to send Natchevitch on a confidential mission to Coburg Palace.

His instructions were categoric, either to bring back Prince Ferdinand, or a renouncement in writing of the Throne, as Bulgaria could not wait; and if the Prince could not or would not take the crown as it was offered, they must look elsewhere for somebody else who would.

The result of Natchevitch's arguments was that they started together from Vienna on the 10th of August, and steaming down the Danube, reached Turn Severin three or four days later. Here he was met in mid-stream by the Regents, who went on board his steamer, the *Orient*, and the new Prince landed at Sistoff amidst the acclamations of the people.

Before leaving Vienna he had written letters to the Emperor and to Count Kalnoky, both of whom had tried to dissuade him from the adventure, as they persisted in regarding it. In these letters he declared his firm resolve to devote his whole existence to Bulgaria, and expressed a hope that any irregularity that might exist in the method of convocation of the Chamber which had elected him, might be overlooked or forgiven in later years. This seemed a reasonable enough aspiration, but events have proved that it was not destined to be realised. At least, in accepting the Throne under

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such circumstances, Prince Ferdinand gave a proof of considerable personal courage and devotion, for which the nation were, and expressed themselves, deeply sensible. If he had Europe against him, he certainly had all Bulgaria with him, when he took the oath before the Grand Assembly, at Tirnovo, on August 14th, 1887.

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CHAPTER VII.

PRINCE FERDINAND.

Prince Ferdinand's position—Its contested legality—Formation of Stambuloff Ministry—The Elections—The Esky Zagra band—The Bourgas expedition—Nabôkoff is shot by peasants—Count Ignatieff's complicity—Turkey's protest against Prince Ferdinand—Lord Salisbury's and Count Kalnoky's views—Stambuloff marries—The Oriental Railway—The Capture of Messrs. Binder and Landler by brigands—Extermination of brigandage by Stambuloff.

I HAVE said that Prince Ferdinand had all Europe against him. His assumption of the dignity of Prince of Bulgaria was hailed by a general regret of the Powers that it had been effected without the consent of Russia, as it was evident that it would open the door to fresh intrigues, and, possibly, to a renewal of the whole question. Russia stubbornly adhered to her attitude of what she termed "passive protest." Her grounds were that General Kaulbars, not having considered the Bulgarians in a fit frame of mind, politically, to hold their elections, had declared that Russia would consider them, the Chamber elected, and any and every act of such Chamber, or Assembly, as illegal. Consequently, the choice of Prince Ferdinand was illegal. How far Russia possessed the right, by an assumed *veto*, to invalidate the elections might, perhaps, be contested, but she never

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permitted her right to be questioned, and it appears to have been tacitly recognised then, and since. At the same time it is as well clearly to define the principle on which she acted. In every other respect the election of Prince Ferdinand was perfectly in order; but because Russia chose to ignore the elections to the Assembly, for no other reason than that she wished to prolong the state of uncertainty in Bulgaria until she could find a good opportunity of stepping in herself, the unfortunate Prince was from the first, and is still (June, 1895) unrecognised as Prince of Bulgaria. He is merely Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, *de facto*, but not *de jure*, ruling the Bulgarians.

Directly after his election Russia approached the Powers with a proposal simply to eject Prince Ferdinand, and to appoint General Ernroth, Regent or Governor of the two Bulgarias. The Porte also addressed a circular to the European Cabinets, couched as follows:—

"Your Excellency is aware of the circumstances under which the election of Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, as Prince of Bulgaria, took place. You are also cognisant of the declarations made by His Highness, that he would not leave Vienna until his election should have obtained the sanction of the Suzerain Court, according to the terms of the Treaty of Berlin, and the consent of the other Signatory Powers.

"At the moment when an exchange of views had commenced between the Imperial Government and the Great Powers on the subject of this election, we learned that Prince Ferdinand, contrary to his previous declarations, proposed to leave his residence of Ebenthal for Bulgaria; and this inopportune project made it our duty to address to him, through our Ambassador, at Vienna, and other intermediaries, strong and repeated advice, engaging him

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not to depart from the course which he had planned for himself, and which, at various intervals, he had announced to us.

"Notwithstanding the above-mentioned declarations, the Prince has seen fit to abandon his original project, and suddenly to leave his residence to go and take possession of the administration of the Principality where he now is.

"I consider it superfluous to call the deep and serious attention of the Government to which you are accredited to the gravity of this act, which is as unexpected as it is contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin."

France, Germany, and Austria all joined in an opinion condemning the action of the Prince, and instructing their Consular officials to do nothing which would imply anything like a recognition of His Highness in the character of Prince of Bulgaria. The French Government broke off not only official but also officious relations, and withdrew their Agent. England again was the only Power which seemed inclined to look leniently upon the action of the Prince.

Lord Salisbury held the firmest language, both to M. de Staal and to Rustem Pasha, saying to the former that a Russian occupation was likely to lead to the gravest complications; and to the Turkish Ambassador that an intervention by the Porte would possibly set in motion all the turbulent elements, both in Bulgaria and Macedonia. He added that it appeared to him useless to discuss the removal of Prince Ferdinand, so long as the Powers had not agreed upon somebody to take his place, either as Prince or Regent.

Stambuloff, seeing the attitude of England, called upon Mr. O'Conor at Sofia, and after informing him that he

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was aware that the Porte had applied to the German Government to ask it to use its good offices with that of England, Austria, and Italy, to induce them to assent to the Russian proposal to appoint General Ernroth, Regent of Bulgaria, declared that he considered such a proposal as an insult and outrage to the entire nation, which they would resist as far as was in their power, and only submit to if compelled by an overwhelming military force, or if all the Powers united together to compel them.

This was the state of affairs when Stambuloff formed his celebrated Ministry, but we may go back for a week or so to follow the course of events which led up to his accepting the Premiership.

After taking the oath at Tirnovo, the Prince at once commenced issuing proclamations, manifestoes, and orders to the Army, acting as if his election had been recognised, which was indeed the only course for him to pursue.

His first proclamation is worth reproduction, as its independent tone gave great umbrage to Russia and Turkey, and nearly led to summary measures. It ran as follows :—

"We, Ferdinand I., by the Grace of God and the Will of the Nation, Prince of Bulgaria :

"After having taken the oath before the Greek National Assembly in the ancient Capital, do hereby proclaim to our beloved* people that we take into our hands the reins of government of this country, which we will govern in conformity to its fundamental law, and to whose prosperity, greatness, and glory we will devote all our efforts, while we shall be ever ready to sacrifice our life for its good. On mounting the throne of the glorious

* In the copies posted over the towns, the word "free" was substituted for "beloved."

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Bulgarian Kings, we consider it our sacred duty to express to the noble Bulgarian nation our sincere gratitude, both for the confidence it has shown in our election as Bulgarian Prince, and for its wise and patriotic conduct in the troubled and trying times which our country is going through. At the same time, we thank the Regents and their Government for their wise and successful conduct of affairs, whereby they were able to defend our country's independence and liberty in the most critical times. Fully convinced that the nation and its gallant army will rally round our Throne, and support us in our endeavours for the good of the country, we invoke God's blessing on all our acts and undertakings.

"Long live free and independent Bulgaria!

(Signed) "FERDINAND I."

The mention of the glorious Bulgarian Kings, and free and independent Bulgaria, were calculated to excite the susceptibilities of the Porte in no small degree, but some allowance was made for the exuberance of style in a newly-elected Prince addressing his people for the first time, and the proclamation was allowed to pass with a mere note of censure.

As soon as by taking the oath, and issuing the foregoing proclamation, Prince Ferdinand had actually taken over the government, the Regency which had so valiantly held Bulgaria, came to an end. It was with an inexpressible relief that Stambuloff put off the weighty responsibilities, which he had borne virtually alone since the departure of Prince Alexander. He himself told me that "no words can picture my delight at the arrival of the Prince. It had been a perpetual nightmare and terror to me that Bulgaria might lose her independence under my Regency, and that my name would be handed down to posterity as

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a reproach. When the Prince left for Sofia with his new Ministry, I spent three days with my friends in fêteing my deliverance. They were three of the happiest days of my life."

His joy was destined to be short-lived. Scarcely had Stoiloff reached Sofia when he resigned, declaring, which was true, that he had no party, and could not govern the country with men holding opposite views to his own. Stambuloff was telegraphed for, but refused to move for more than a week, on plea of illness, and only went upon a rumour that Turkey was preparing a protest. In the capital he found Stoiloff at his wits' end, in the endeavour to find a successor. An attempt to form a Ministry under M. Tontcheff had failed, and it was tolerably clear that Stambuloff would have to undertake the task. He objected to it for several reasons. In the first place, having been Regent with practically unlimited power, he considered it would be awkward for the Prince, who now occupied nominally the post he had himself held before as Ruler, to have him for a Premier. Secondly, as Regent he had acquired a certain reputation and popularity, and none knew better than he that in accepting the post of President he ran a great risk of losing both, and it seemed scarcely worth while for a miserable thousand francs a month, and the name of Minister, for him, the ex-Regent, to affront the cares and worries he had hoped to have done with. And, lastly, the little he had seen of the Prince had convinced him that they would not get on well together, and he did not care to begin another fight. All these reasons he frankly told Prince Ferdinand and Stoiloff, but they both declared

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that unless he would form a Cabinet, the Ministries would be left with Secretaries as Gerants, since Stoiloff absolutely refused to remain another day as Premier.*

Under the circumstances, with every Chancery in Europe busy in attempting to devise some method of snubbing Bulgaria, with a new, inexperienced, and apparently somewhat headstrong, young man as Prince, it would have been the height of folly to leave the administration in the hands of Gerants, and with a heavy heart Stambuloff gave way. His famous Ministry, formed on the 1st September, 1887, and which lasted till the 31st May, 1894, with various changes in the different departments, but under his Premiership the whole time, consisted at first of the following:

President of the Council, and Minister of the Interior	M. STAMBULOFF.
Minister of War	COL. MUTKUROFF.
,, Public Instruction	M. GIVKOFF.
,, Justice	M. STOILOFF.
,, Finance	M. NATCHEVITCH.
,, Foreign Affairs and Worship	M. STRANSKY.

The first care of the new Cabinet was to prepare for the elections. No secret was made of the intention of the Bulgarian refugees at Constantinople, headed by Zankoff, to create disturbances, if possible, and they were likely to be ably seconded by the Russophil and

* It is remarkable throughout Bulgarian history that its public men have never, as in most countries, striven to attain the honoured position of Premier in keen rivalry. On the contrary, it has almost invariably been with reluctance that a statesman has accepted, not only the Premiership, but even a minor portfolio, the fact being that a Ministry in the Principality is looked upon as anything but a silken couch for taking of ease.

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other Opposition elements in Bulgaria, headed by the Metropolitan Clement, Karavéloff, and Radoslâvoff.

Prince Ferdinand, especially, looked forward to the elections with some trepidation, his agents abroad having sent him reports to the effect that Russia was preparing, either to bring in her candidates, or to stir up riots at any cost. Amongst other stories came a despatch from Bucharest that M. Hitrovo, who was known to be in the closest relations with Zankoff and Clement, had received one million roubles from Russia for distribution, and that part of this money was already being secretly distributed. Manifestoes, signed by the "Secret Committee" at Constantinople, attacking the Government and the Prince in abusive language, were freely circulated, and it looked as if a very bitter struggle was likely. Before the day fixed, Prince Ferdinand called up Stambuloff, and told him that he was well aware that money was needed in elections, and he would put a sum of half a million francs unreservedly at his disposal, to do what he pleased with. Stambuloff replied that he neither feared Russian roubles nor needed French francs. He laughingly said that, at a rough guess, he should put down the election expenses of the party for the whole of Bulgaria at about one thousand francs, and that His Highness need not distress himself.

On the 9th October they duly came off, and resulted in an overwhelming majority for the National Party. There were riots at several places, notably at Esky Zagra and Tsaribrod, where the Zankoff and Radoslâvoff partisans were strong, and there is not the slightest doubt that intimidation was freely resorted to. This, however, saved

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the Government from employing force, and if a few Opposition members were unjustly prevented from receiving the support of their friends at the polls, the result in general would have been the same, had the elections been perfectly unfettered. In proof of the confidence of Stambuloff in this view, it may be mentioned that as soon as the Chamber met to confirm or invalidate the results, Stambuloff rose in his place on the Ministerial Bench, and proposed that, at Aidos, where only about a dozen had been prevented from voting, the result should be allowed to stand, as, even had they recorded their votes, it would not have changed the seat. His motion was only carried by a majority of six or seven. He then proposed that, whereas at Tsaribrod the Nationalists had taken violent possession of the urns, and prevented the Opposition from voting at all, the election should be held again; and here he was supported by the whole House. So much has always been written about the election riots, and the pressure exercised by the Government, that it is worth while to put on record the fact that an absolutely free election has probably never been held in Bulgaria, with the exception perhaps of the first two, and is never likely to be. The amount of pressure exercised depends principally upon the strength or weakness of the Government, but even when it is powerful enough not to need the employment of any coercive measures, the electors themselves, from old habit, and in the fierceness of their political passions, will often come to blows, when fighting is quite superfluous. After every election the Opposition invariably produces a long list of cases of

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maltreatment, and the Government as regularly puts in a solemn and formal declaration that no force was ever used. It is, however, a part of the programme in the elections, which everybody understands perfectly well, that some heads should be broken, and the complaints and lamentations of the defeated are never treated seriously. The main returns are not actually very much interfered with by these amenities, as it is only in particular strongholds of the Opposition, as a rule, that the Government interferes; and in the rest of the cases the majority bully the minority because they are the majority, and therefore would elect their candidate, even without the violence, which they delight in as much as Irishmen.

Having safely weathered the elections, Stambuloff set to work to defeat the designs of Russia; both by frequent interviews with the Foreign Representatives at Sofia, to whom he repeated his firm determination not to permit any interference, or to cede to any force other than the united compulsory weight of all the Powers, and by representing to the Porte, through his trusted agent, Dr. Vulkovitch, that in her demands Russia was actuated by a desire to seize Bulgaria for herself. The same threadbare old arguments were brought up once more, and the discussion went on as tediously as it had done ever since the union with Roumelia; but the monotony was somewhat broken by the Bulgarian emigrants at Constantinople, whose impatience at the slow and ponderous steps of diplomacy took shape actively in the occurrences at Esky Zagra and Bourgas, in December, 1887.

These restless spirits organised several bands, with

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which they hoped to raise the populace at various places, and worry and harass the Government into taking measures strong enough to provoke reprisals. M. Madjâroff, the present Minister of Communications, prepared one body of brigands, who were to enter by Dervish Tepeh, and raise a revolt at Esky Zagra, but the scheme was nipped in the bud by the vigilance of the authorities, who caught and shot several of the outlaws. A more serious attempt was that directed upon Bourgas, by Zankoff and Nabôkoff, the former of whom, however, as usual, kept at a safe distance from the scene of action; whilst Nabôkoff, who had already, it will be remembered, fathered a similar adventure, led his men in person. The troop consisted of one or two Bulgarian outlaws, a priest, and thirty or thirty-five Montenegrins, recruited from the slums of Constantinople. The Montenegrin Government had intelligence of the plot, and warned the Porte, which, nevertheless, took no precautions against it, and the expedition landed, in small boats, at a point close to the Turkish frontier, and advanced inland, requisitioning arms and ammunition as they went, from the villagers. A gendarme, however, who had seen them disembark, rode off, and gave the alarm to Sizopolis, whence the news was telegraphed to the Prefect of Bourgas. That functionary, without delay, placed himself at the head of a company of soldiers, and, telegraphing in all directions for reinforcements, marched out to meet Nabôkoff. They encountered him about twenty-five kilometres outside Bourgas, and after a small battle, which lasted more than an hour, killed seven or eight of the insurgents, and took several more prisoners; whilst Nabôkoff and the remainder fled

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precipitately. The police gave chase, raising a hue and cry, and the result was that Captain Nabôkoff was shot by a party of peasants, who had tracked him into a wood. They turned a deaf ear to his request to be tried, retorting that they did not intend giving him up again to the Russian Vice-Consul, and shot him down. Upon his person was found the following letter, signed by Petro Petrovitch, at Constantinople, and addressed to Count Ignatieff, A.D.C. to the Czar.

"SERENE HIGHNESS,—In connection with a communication received, Nicolai Nicolaievitch Nabôkoff arrived here to enlist Montenegrins for the matter in hand. Whereas, however, nothing was done, or settled, with Prince Nicolas of Montenegro, no course now remains open except for Your Highness to make every effort to send a secret message to Cettinjeh, to request Prince Nicolas to direct his Representative here, M. Boghitchevitch, to do nothing to prevent our enlisting Montenegrins for the business, both here and in Greece. We can very easily, and in a short time, get together some thousand or fifteen hundred, and do everything. The Embassy here must also be told to view everything with indifference, and place no obstacles in the way. Everything can be accomplished very easily, and without compromising anyone. Alone, the Bulgarians can do nothing, and without a blow from outside nothing serious can take place. Please speak to Nabôkoff, who is going there, and tell him to do what is possible.

(Signed) "PETRO.

"CONSTANTINOPLE, *Feb. 5th*, 1887."

This letter proved conclusively the connivance of Russia, but the time which elapsed between the date of its writing and the adventure of Nabôkoff, would also seem to point to no very great enthusiasm on the part of

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the Slav Committee, of which Count Ignatieff was one of the leaders.

None of their plots having brought any tangible benefit to Russia, she determined to press the question more vigorously through diplomacy. She succeeded in securing the support of Germany and France in her demand for the Porte to send a formal declaration of the illegality of the Prince's *status* to Sofia, but neither England, Austria, nor Italy would have anything to do with it, and this alone deprived the note of most of its *vim*.

The wording of it was as follows:—

"From the Grand Vizier to M. Stambuloff.

"At the time of the arrival of Prince Ferdinand of Coburg in Bulgaria, I informed His Highness, by a telegram dated the 22nd August, 1887, that his election by the Bulgarian Assembly, not having received the assent of all the Powers, Signatories of the Treaty of Berlin, and such election not having been sanctioned by the Sublime Porte, his presence in Bulgaria was contrary to the Treaty of Berlin, and was illegal. I notify to-day to the Bulgarian Government that, in the eyes of the Imperial Government, the situation is still unchanged, that is to say, that the presence of Prince Ferdinand at the Head of the Principality is illegal, and contrary to the Treaty of Berlin.

"*March 4th*, 1888."

The view taken by England was tersely put by Lord Salisbury to M. de Staal, as follows:—*

"I said that I had no difficulty whatever in admitting, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, the illegal character of Prince Ferdinand's position. The Turkish Government were perfectly well aware of our opinions in that respect.

* *Vide Blue Book*, No. 3, 1889, Affairs in the East.

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"To join with the other Powers of Europe for the purpose of repeating to the Sublime Porte this well-known fact, would be a step without meaning, unless it aimed at some practical result, not expressed in the communication it was proposed to make."

It was substantially because there was evidently much more beneath the surface of the note than appeared, that England, Austria, and Italy declined to join in recommending its despatch. Count Kalnoky was equally explicit when he said that "the immediate objective of Russia at this moment was to get rid of Prince Ferdinand — but behind Prince Ferdinand there was M. Stambuloff, who was, if possible, more objectionable still in the eyes of Russia. Was he to be got rid of, too? And who, in that event, was to take his place, and be responsible for the maintenance of public tranquillity and order in the country?"

Even at this early stage Europe had come to recognise that it must look to Stambuloff principally for the preservation of the peace, and that there was no other factor capable of taking his place, and controlling successfully the threatened destinies of his country.

When he received the telegram of the Grand Vizier, he naturally showed it to the Prince, who anxiously enquired what answer he meant to send. Stambuloff replied, "Telegrams of this sort are best left unanswered. Your Highness may rest assured that we shall best please Turkey herself by ignoring it." After a short while had elapsed Stambuloff called upon the Ottoman Representative, who admitted that the declaration of the Porte was made at the instigation of Russia, and that she neither

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expected nor wished for any notice to be taken of it. With the despatch of this Vizirial telegram, Russia may be said to have closed her diplomatic campaign against Prince Ferdinand. As we shall see, various plots and conspiracies occurred later on, but though doubtless encouraged by the Panslavist and so-called Russophil Party, they could scarcely be considered as enjoying official countenance. By the formal declaration, repeated after a year's rule, of the illegality of Prince Ferdinand's position, Russia claimed that at any favourable moment he might be ejected, and she trusted to events to furnish the opportunity. From this date, however, she relapsed into more really "passive" protest, and the Bulgarian Question has not given much trouble either to the Porte or the Chanceries of Europe since then.

The rest of the year 1888 was spent chiefly in internal reforms and progress. The most important step was the taking over of the Vakarel-Bellova section of the Oriental Railway, and the extension of the same to Sarambey. This line had been constructed by Baron Hirsch and the "Société des Raccordements," on a Convention which stipulated that, should they not commence the working of it up to a certain date, the right to do so would devolve upon the Government of the country through which the line passed. Notwithstanding this clause, Messrs. Hirsch and the Société were engaged in negotiations for selling the line to the Vitalis Company, which was supposed by the Bulgarians to be merely a dummy in front of the Austrian Staatsbahn. They protested, but while the first exchange of views were going on, the representatives of the Baron and

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the Société—Messrs. Binder and Landler—whilst sitting in the restaurant at the Bellova station, whither they had gone to report on the question, were audaciously kidnapped by brigands. This incident gave the Bulgarian Government the excuse they wanted, and they immediately picketed the line with troops, and took possession of the stations. The Turkish Government remonstrated indignantly, though, as a matter of fact, it did not matter much to them who had the railway, the Bulgarians being, if anything, more desirable than the Austrians. Stambuloff replied that they had not taken possession of the line except for purposes of safeguarding it pending the issue of negotiations, but being once in possession they soon began to run trains, and before long formally took over the working of their own section.

The incident which gave them an opening—the capture of Messrs. Binder and Landler—threatened at one time to assume very serious proportions, but owing to the energetic measures taken by the Government, the prisoners were finally restored after the payment of a heavy ransom, and then the work of extermination commenced. The band which had perpetrated the Bellova outrage was about forty strong, under the leadership of the famous Costa Giurgiukly, but nearly half of these were either captured or shot, whilst Costa himself escaped to Servia, where he remained until lately, returning to Sofia after Stambuloff's fall.

The reason that Stambuloff took such radical measures against brigandage, which was rife all over Bulgaria when he assumed office, was that the acts of brigandage were usually directed against influential foreigners, and

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constituted a chronic stick to lay on to the back of the Bulgarian Government. Hitherto the country had been so torn by political discords that no attention could be devoted to brigandage, but by the summer of 1889 there was not a single band left in Bulgaria. On the one hand, Stambuloff gained considerable credit for having achieved this result, but on the other he made enemies of all the Macedonian brigands and their friends, and that enmity, which has already cost him dearly, may possibly one day terminate in his assassination. For the Macedonian never remembers a kindness nor forgets a wrong, and there are dozens of desperate men who can look back on the days when Stambuloff was living amongst them, an outlaw like themselves, but who would be ready and pleased to murder him to-day for the stern repression which he exercised throughout his tenure of the Premiership. Another reason for his severity was that in striking at brigandage, he frequently discovered that he was dealing a back-handed blow at the Panslavists, and it was now war to the knife between them and him. As an instance of this may be quoted the statement made by one of the Bellova brigands, captured near Sofia. He had formerly been a non-commissioned officer in the 1st Cavalry Regiment, and passed through the N.C.O.'s School at Nikolaieff, in Russia. In the Servian War he had won the Cross for Valour. A year before he had fled the country to escape prosecution for a criminal offence, and crossing into Servia, was taken up at Nish by a Panslavist agent, who fed him, and eight others in the same kind of situation as himself,

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throughout the winter, with money supplied by the Belgrade Committee. In the spring the same agent furnished them with arms and ammunition, and directed them to proceed to certain villages across the Bulgarian frontier, where he said they would find a hearty welcome from the peasants, who were only awaiting their arrival to rise against the Government. They were joined by many others, and crossed over under the leadership of ex-Captain Kessaroff, formerly of the Struma Regiment, who had taken part in the kidnapping of Prince Alexander. They found, however, a very hostile reception, and were hunted so closely by the troops that they broke up and retreated to the mountains, and some of them took refuge in the vast forest of Bellova, where Costa Guirgiukly formed his band, and they lived on brigandage. This man had upon him more than two hundred pounds, his share of the ransom paid for Messrs. Binder and Landler.

With the opening of the Vakarel-Bellova Railway, the suppression of brigandage, and the cessation of diplomatic attack by Russia, the Stambuloff regime had every reason to be satisfied with its first fifteen months' work. There had already been some friction in the Ministry, but it had only served to show the increasing strength of Stambuloff's personal authority, and the end of 1888 saw him wielding an influence which few cared openly to dispute.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHURCH AND THE PANITZA PLOT.

Split in the Ministry—Resignation of Stoiloff and Natchevitch—Stambuloff and the Conservatives—Intriguing Churchmen—Three Bishops expelled from Sofia—A seditious petition to the Exarch—A reconciliation patched up—Prince Ferdinand and Princess Marie Louise of Parma—A question of Religion—Stambuloff deals with the constitutional difficulty—Disaffection of Major Panitza—Another Russian conspiracy—Discovery of the Plot, and arrest of Panitza—His trial and condemnation—The death warrant signed by the Prince—M. Stambuloff's marriage.

IN November, 1888, the Cabinet was disturbed by the resignation of MM. Stoiloff and Natchevitch. The ostensible reason was the throwing out by the Chamber of a Criminal Code which had been elaborated by Stoiloff with great pains. The severity of the penalties for treason did not please the Deputies, and Stoiloff angrily refused to discuss the point, and withdrew his whole project. Thereupon both he and his Conservative colleague, Natchevitch, handed in their resignations. This incident was, however, only a pretext, for considerable tension had existed from the very first between Stambuloff and these two. Natchevitch complained that his acts were perpetually being unfairly criticised in the newspaper *Svoboda*, and that it was not honourable for the President, through his organ, to find fault with the conduct of one of his Ministers. Stambuloff declared that he had nothing to do with the writing of the articles

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in question, and in a measure apologised for them, and the quarrel was patched up for a short while. On the fall of the Conservatives, however, a violent article came out which tore down the mask for ever, and proved that the breach between Stambuloff and the Conservatives was irreparable.

Before their leaving office they had been approached by the Radoslavists with the proposal to form a coalition to overturn Stambuloff, but had refused. They were now left without any appreciable number of followers, many of the old Conservatives having joined the more decided parties of Zankoff, Karavéloff, Radoslâvoff, and even of Stambuloff. The truth is that the Conservatives have no definite policy beyond a vague yearning for a reconciliation with Russia. They are not ultra-Russian like the Zankoffists, but they deprecate the defiant attitude of the Nationalists. This kind of neutral and trimming programme never suited the Bulgarian temperament, and the Conservatives, even when in power, are only able to maintain themselves by the support of other factions; their own followers in the country not being sufficiently numerous to give them a majority.

This may be the place to devote a few words to MM. Stoiloff and Natchevitch, who are undoubtedly the most influential public men of Bulgaria, after Stambuloff. M. Stoiloff was educated at Robert College, at Constantinople, which establishment he left with the reputation of being the most brilliant pupil it had ever produced. He finished his studies abroad, taking a degree as Doctor of Law.

He returned to Bulgaria as Private Secretary to Prince

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Alexander, and took part in several of the brief Ministries of that period. He is a man of great culture, urbane manners, and pleasing exterior. It is extremely difficult to ruffle him, and he does not allow trifles to disturb the calm with which he watches the progress of public affairs, which he usually sees through a rosy mist. He is not ambitious or fond of the attributes of power, and often feels annoyed at being obliged to participate in the rough methods of his colleagues. He is probably the only Bulgarian statesman of any prominence, except M. Grékoff, who has not more enemies than friends.

M. Natchevitch is the very antithesis to Stoiloff. He was a revolutionary in his youth, and his violent nature led him to participate actively, in the earlier struggles of Bulgaria, often together with Stambuloff. Under Prince Alexander he was appointed Bulgarian Representative to Vienna, where he gained some experience of the outside world. It was he who accompanied Prince Ferdinand to Bulgaria, and Stambuloff offered him a place in the Cabinet, together with Stoiloff, in order to prevent him from opposing his rule at the outset. There was, nevertheless, scarcely any pretence of cordiality between them, and as soon as he felt himself strong enough to do without them, Stambuloff got rid of the two Conservatives. There are some slight points of resemblance in the characters of these old opponents, Natchevitch possessing the same headstrong will and domineering bent as Stambuloff. He has not, however, the same width of views, nor the same talent for organisation. He is a bad miniature of his old chief, and he has the reputation of deceiving even his best friends, and of being

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almost incapable of proceeding in a straight line, if there is a possible corner to go round. The way in which Stambuloff threw away the Conservatives as soon as he had no further need of them has always been brought up as a reproach against him, and not without foundation. He feared, however, the falsity of Natchevitch, and he could not rely upon Stoiloff for any really energetic support, whilst the air was so charged with intrigues that he preferred to have men of straw round him, who, if they could not help him much, might at least be relied upon not to thwart him, or join any of his adversaries. M. Natchevitch was replaced by M. Salabasheff, and M. Stoiloff by M. Tontcheff, the President of the Chamber. It was generally believed at the time, that by the loss of the two outgoing Ministers, both of whom were men comparatively well known to the world of Europe, Stambuloff's Cabinet would be seriously weakened, if its very existence was not threatened. He himself, however, was quite confident in his ability to carry on the Government with his own party alone, and events certainly seemed to warrant his assumption.

In the beginning of 1889 the Holy Synod was convoked in Sofia. It consisted properly of the five Metropolitans of Sofia, Varna, Vratza, Tirnovo, and Rustchuk. Of these Gregory, of Rustchuk, was unable to attend through illness, and Cyril, of Sofia, whose loyalty to the Government was undoubted, was sent to take the temporary charge of the diocese of Widdin. This left only Clement, formerly Metropolitan of Sofia, once head of the Provisional Government after the *Coup d'état;* Simeon of Varna, who had been suspended

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by the Regency for a year for sedition; and Constantine of Varna, who was notoriously a Russian agent. Directly after their arrival these prelates were invited to pay their respects to the Prince, Stambuloff, and the Minister of Public Worship. Monsignor Simeon, the President, refused to do so on the grounds that Prince Ferdinand had repeatedly infringed the Canons of the Bulgarian Church, and encouraged Catholicism to its detriment. Stambuloff, who was well aware of the danger of letting the Church defy the State, instantly retorted by challenging the legality of the Synod as constituted, since two of the Metropolitans had not served the time prescribed by law to qualify them for election. He, therefore, declined to have any official relations with them, and ordered them to return to their dioceses. The Bishops, however, refused to go, except under compulsion, and, quoting a precedent in the Synod of 1886, declared their intention of continuing in session. This open defiance was accepted boldly by Stambuloff, who informed them, on January 7th, that if they had not left in three days' time, of their own free will, he should find himself under the grievous necessity of expelling them by force. The Bishops could not believe that this was more than a threat, or that any Minister would dare to use violence against the heads of the Church. They little knew the character of the man they had to deal with.

At three o'clock in the morning of the twelfth, the recalcitrant priests were awakened from their slumbers by gendarmes, who escorted them out of Sofia, and back to their respective bishoprics. This high-handed

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procedure called forth furious protests on all sides, and was much blamed by many of Stambuloff's friends, their principal argument being that by his action he was offering a weapon for agitation to enlist the sympathies of Orthodox fanaticism in denouncing the persecution of the Bulgarian Church by an unrecognized Prince and his illegal Government. Stambuloff, however, saw further than they did, and acted entirely on his own principles.*

His own private information had been that the meetings of the Synod were rapidly becoming the resort of all the Russophils of Sofia, who were plotting how to turn out "the Catholic." He therefore begged them to spend their Christmas elsewhere. They refused, and Stambuloff was told by his spies that amongst their decisions was, that on New Year's Day, the 13th of January, they should all three, when performing High Mass in Sofia Cathedral, pronounce the Anathema against the Prince, and this was to serve as a signal for the rising of the Russophils. Acting upon this information Stambuloff expelled them; and there cannot be two opinions, when viewed in the light of history, but that he did well. None the less, the Opposition determined to attack him, and a petition was drawn up to the Exarch, at Constantinople, signed by

* He often told me that whatever important step he had taken, relying upon his own judgment alone, had almost invariably turned out to be the right one; and when he had allowed himself to be influenced by the reasoning of others, he had been led into errors. So far had this belief in his luck gone that, as he progressed in his career, he became more and more confident in himself, and impatient of advice, till towards the close, he would scarcely brook the expression of contrary opinion, even from Prince Ferdinand. It was partly this superstitious trust in his own star which led to his fall.

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twenty of the most prominent Russophils. It is worth noting that amongst the signatures was that of M. Ivan Gueshoff, at present the Prince's Finance Minister. The petition ran as follows (the "impure spring" being intended to signify the Prince):—

"YOUR BEATITUDE,—In order to dry up this impure spring, which threatens utterly to corrupt all that is holy, pure, and elevated in Bulgaria, and which is sapping the foundation of all grace in this country, it is necessary first of all to cut short the nourishment which it receives from the original foes of our race and faith. Whether this will happen soon is known only to the omniscient God. To us it only remains to join your Beatitude, and all our Holy Church, in offering unceasing prayers to Him to hasten that time, in order that these days of moral decay, through which our country is passing, may be shortened as soon as possible: to stay the hands of the sons of darkness and ungodliness, to dry up the veins of the foul spring, to support all true followers of grace, and to crown with success the efforts of those who are devoted to the sanctity of His Name and Church.

"Your Beatitude! to you, as high head of the Orthodox Church of the whole Bulgarian nation, we direct our hopes that you will act for the preservation of its ancestral dignity, for in its bosom has been preserved entire our much-tried Bulgarian nation, by whom it has been revived politically, and through whom our hopes that its life may be strengthened for a brighter and purer future."

Stambuloff immediately struck back by imprisoning all the signatories of this seditious petition, and letting the Exarch know, through Doctor Vulkovitch, at Constantinople, that as long as the Bishops behaved themselves and attended to their duties he would treat them well, but if they meddled in politics he was firmly resolved to

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deal with the utmost severity, both with them and their allies. This remonstrance came with the more force since the Bulgarian Exarch received his stipend from the Sofia Treasury, and Stambuloff was quite capable of cutting it off in the case of a rupture. Monsignor Joseph, however, who is an extremely clever and far-seeing ecclesiastic, contented himself with a state of masterly inaction, and in his fight with the Church, a most formidable antagonist, the redoubtable President carried off all the honours. In order not to have to return to this subject, and to make the story of his relations with the High Clergy continuous, and perhaps thereby clearer, we may trace it briefly through its subsequent phases.

The three Prelates, disappointed at receiving no support from the Exarch, were temporarily reduced to subjection, and the Synod did not meet again till 1890, when it was convoked at Rustchuk, under Gregory. Clement and his acolytes were still waiting for their revenge, and the memory of 1888 was rankling deep. Stambuloff had, however, in the meanwhile succeeded in obtaining from the Sultan, the Firman for the appointment of three more Bulgarian Bishops in Macedonia, and with this victory behind him, he went himself to Rustchuk. Here he visited several of the Bishops, and effected a quasi-reconciliation between them and himself. The bases of it were not well known, but I remember at the time it was believed that it had been brought about by the use of language more firm than gentle. The end, at any rate, was gained, and ostensibly peace was proclaimed in the newspapers between Stambuloff and the Clergy.

During 1890, 1891, and 1892, Prince Ferdinand was

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seeking for a spouse, and Stambuloff, with the daily fear before his eyes of an assassination of the Prince before he should have founded a dynasty, pressed him continually forward in his quest. For if an infant heir should be born it would probably cause the murder party to abandon their designs, since the death of Ferdinand would only lead to a Regency. In '92, negotiations were opened with the Duke of Parma for the hand of the Princess Marie Louise, but the Duke insisted as a *sine quâ non*, that any issue of the marriage should be brought up in the Catholic faith. This was in direct contradiction with Article 38 of the Constitution, and in order to accede to his demand it was necessary to alter the Constitution. It was a step before which the boldest Minister might be excused for hesitating. It would not only meet with the most strenuous opposition of the whole Church, which, for political reasons, was sure of the support of Russia, but even the Nationalists themselves would be most averse to any meddling with the Constitution, which they had always looked upon as their most precious treasure. After long and anxious reflection, Stambuloff, nevertheless, resolved to make the attempt. The necessity for the marriage was, in his eyes, so pressing, that it dwarfed all else, and, though he was aware that he was risking his position and making a certain sacrifice of much of his influence with his own followers, he once more threw himself into the breach.

The change had to be passed first through the Legislative Chamber, and then through the Grand Assembly. If it could obtain the assent of the former, that of the latter was a mere matter of form.

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Stambuloff summoned a meeting of all the heads of his Party, and explained to them at length the reasons which made it, in his opinion, imperative to alter the Constitution. Not one single member present could be found to agree with him, as they all declared with unanimity that such a change would offend the religious feelings of the whole nation, and would cost the Liberals their popularity. Disappointed, but not discouraged, Stambuloff called them together again the next day, and when they expected to hear that he had renounced his project, they had to listen to an impassioned speech, in which Stambuloff, with extraordinary self-devotion, took upon himself the whole odium of the measure, solemnly stating that it was not the Prince who wished the change; on the contrary, that His Highness was opposed to it, but that he, Stambuloff, saw in it the only way out of their difficulties, and was so determined to carry it through, that, if his Party persisted in withholding their support from him, he was there to resign his leadership, and throw the whole responsibility of what might follow upon them.

It was only after a terrible struggle that the resolute Premier extracted from the Deputies the promise of their support. Stambuloff told me himself that he had come out of it "like Jacob after he had wrestled with God." As had been foreseen, the protests of the Church and Russia were launched with energy against the impious Stambuloff, who for a short while was in some danger of falling. The Exarch at Constantinople was the engine most to be feared, and Stambuloff spared nothing in his efforts to come to an understanding with him.

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Monsignor Joseph had at first been an ardent Russophil, in the belief that Bulgaria's best interests lay in Russia's keeping, but as he watched the methods she employed and the gallant resistance shown by Stambuloff, his true patriotism prevailed, and he was already more than half won over. In this crisis the Premier appealed to him, if he had any love for his country, or any respect for his own good name, not to lend himself to the agitation being framed against the Prince. The Exarch proved that he was, before everything, a patriot, and assured Stambuloff of his approval at heart of the measure, promising that he would turn a deaf ear to Clement, Gregory, and his followers.

From that time onward the Exarch has been a loyal and valuable ally to the Government, and the final reconciliation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church with its Catholic Prince was sealed by a telegram of congratulation, sent by Monsignor Joseph to Prince Ferdinand, to Pianove, on the day of his marriage.

To return, after this digression, to the point at which we left the Ministry after the failure of the last Russian diplomatic move. For the remainder of 1889 things went on tolerably quietly in Bulgaria, though both her neighbours were in the throes of political crises. King Milan had abdicated in Servia, and M. Bratiano's long Ministry had been overthrown at Bucharest. Neither of these events, however, affected Bulgaria seriously, although at one moment there appeared to be a disposition on the part of Servia to shew herself aggressive. With Roumania the best relations existed from the first, and the friendly attitude of that country has always been the greatest

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encouragement to Bulgaria, when a contrary one might have placed her in a most serious predicament. Party feeling still ran high amongst the various factions, and two Ex-Ministers were condemned to a year's imprison ment for having published an insulting and defamatory telegram concerning Stambuloff and the Prince. These were MM. Radoslâvoff and Ivantchoff. A great outcry was made at the political persecution and tyranny of Stambuloff, but as they were condemned by a properly constituted Tribunal, and on appeal had their sentence reduced to one month's imprisonment, there does not appear to have been any very great wrong done, and probably Stambuloff only wished to frighten them and to show that he was ready and able to put down agitation when it transgressed legal limits. I only mention the incident, because it has often been produced in extenuation of the persecution to which Stambuloff and his partisans were subjected later, and I leave the reader to draw his own comparison.

In the autumn of 1889, a Russian merchant, named Kalubkoff, came to Rustchuk, accompanied by Jacobson, a clerk in the Legation of M. Hitrovo, at Bucharest, in order to try and sell some Berdan rifles to the Bulgarians. After the Servian War there had been a general demand for re-armament, but nothing much had been done up to now. Most of the officers and men in the army liked the old Berdan pattern, as it was a weapon with which they were familiar, and its strong sword-like bayonet pleased them.

Stambuloff, personally, was in favour of buying Mannlichers, but he did not interfere in a contract being made

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by the War Office with Kalubkoff for 30,000 Berdan rifles. The officer, who acted as principal intermediary in this, was Major Panitza. Kalubkoff, however, failed to deliver the rifles within the stipulated time, and the contract was accordingly annulled, to the great vexation of Panitza, who was pecuniarily interested to the extent of several francs a rifle.

It must be understood that Panitza, who was a man of most violent nature, was already extremely discontented and angered against the Prince for having promoted Major Petroff over his head to a Lieutenant-Colonelcy,* and he now entered into active relations with the Russian Agency at Bucharest, and the whole Panslavist organisation. A special cypher was invented, which, under cloak of exchanging questions and answers concerning the rifle contract, enabled correspondence to pass freely between Sofia, Rustchuk, and Bucharest.

All the Slav Committees started into full activity, and even went so far as to choose a successor for the Throne of Prince Ferdinand. Their selection was General Domontovitch. Dragan Zankoff, who was in Belgrade, I believe, at the time, sent a proclamation to Karavéloff and Radoslâvoff for them to sign, whereby they bound themselves to uphold any Government which should turn out the Prince; and the hopes of the Russophils again ran high in secret.

* Colonel Mutkûroff at first refused to draw out the decree promoting Petroff, contrary to the laws of seniority. Pressure was put upon him, and he actually resigned, but at Stambuloff's request resumed office, and drew up the obnoxious document with the remark, "This piece of paper will bring no good with it."

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Stambuloff seized a copy of this proclamation, and was well aware of Panitza's tendencies, since that officer, even in public *cafés*, was in the habit of expressing himself very freely, and in most abusive terms, concerning the Prince. Knowing his character, however, Stambuloff did not attach much importance to his threats. As a matter of fact, though, he had already three-fourths of the Sofia garrison with him, as well as the Prefect of Police, M. Basmadjieff, who was often seen in his company, and who explained this by saying that he was watching him privately.

It was not until January that the full gravity of the plot was revealed. One of the original conspirators, Colonel Kissoff, Commandant of Sofia, at the last moment either repented or felt his heart fail him, and reported to Colonel Mutkûroff that Panitza had come to him, on the 24th, with a proposal that he should hand over the command of the town, and allow him to dethrone the Prince and execute the Ministers. The mere fact of his making such an offer showed that he must have had a fair estimate of Kissoff's disaffection, and eventually it was proved that Kissoff had been an active member of the conspiracy for some time.

When Stambuloff heard Mutkûroff's tale he set his bloodhounds on the track, and in three days was in possession of the plot in most of its details. It was Panitza's servant, who was used as a confidential messenger, who betrayed his master by relating all that he knew before one of Stambuloff's men. The Premier did not wish to act hurriedly, but there was no time to lose.

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On the 31st of January* he summoned a Council of Ministers, or, rather, he called Mutkûroff and Givkoff, who were the only two in whom he reposed trust, and they deliberated till 3 a.m. Their position was one of the most imminent peril. They now knew that the greater part of the garrison was in the plot, and that nearly three-fourths of the officers of the whole army were cognisant of it. The Prefect of Police also being implicated did not improve the outlook.

Stambuloff declared that Panitza must be arrested that same night, at all hazards. His colleagues objected for various reasons, but, as usual, Stambuloff had his way, and summoned Captain Botcheff, Commandant of the 1st Regiment, ordering him to arrest Panitza. He declined the office, and suggested that the Platz-Commandant was the man for such a duty.

Stambuloff then hit upon the decidedly original idea of sending Kissoff, and Basmadjieff the Prefect (the two accomplices), to arrest Panitza. There was a grim irony in this procedure which suited his mood at this critical moment—one of the most critical in his whole life. But as he had no great confidence in these two traitors, going to seize their chief with ten soldiers and six gendarmes, he ordered five police commissaries, upon whom he could rely, with fifty men, to go behind the first party, and see that they executed their mission, giving them orders, if

* As no Blue Books were issued after 1889, and I am writing out of reach of any available means of controlling dates, for which I have to rely mostly upon memory, I crave the indulgence of the reader, if there should be occasional errors of a day or two. The dates given will, however, be found, I believe, in most cases correct, or else very approximate.

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necessary, to make the whole party prisoners together with Panitza. Then he waited to see the result. Half an hour passed, and nobody came. He grew somewhat nervous, and crossed over the way to his old friend Slavkoff, who lived opposite, and begged him to accompany him to Panitza's house, and learn the worst. On reaching it, though, to his intense relief, he found that the arrest had been effected.* In the rooms were found a mass of documents, cypher telegrams, codes, and letters, proving that the Artillery, the Cavalry, and nearly half the Infantry, were in the plot.

On the night of February 1st, a Court Ball had been announced at the Palace. The Prince wished to countermand it, but Stambuloff insisted upon its being held. Out of the two hundred officers present, sixty or seventy per cent. were Panitza's friends and accomplices. They were walking about the saloons, under the angry eye of the Prince, and the cold scathing scorn of Stambuloff, like men in a dream. They fully expected to be arrested *en masse* in the Ball-room, and it was a relief to everybody when the evening came to a close.

But the first day or two which had to elapse before loyal officers could arrive from the provinces to replace the disaffected ones, were a time of intense anxiety. Very few arrests were made on this occasion in comparison with the magnitude of the conspiracy—on account of its very magnitude. It was currently said and repeatedly published at this period that Stambuloff was exaggerating

* It was said at the time that Stambuloff, with a couple of gendarmes, had arrested Panitza himself, but the foregoing is an account of what really occurred.

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the importance of the plot in order to enable him to strike harder at his enemies. The exact opposite was the case. He employed every device to conceal the disgraceful extent to which the disaffection had spread, and very many of those most closely implicated were suffered to go unpunished, beyond the fact of a knowledge of their defection being clearly notified to them.*

The preliminary enquiry lasted until May, and these two or three months raised public excitement in Sofia and abroad to a high pitch. On the 15th March, I recollect having a long conversation with Stambuloff, who was somewhat discouraged at the outlook. He said that Bismarck was turning against the Bulgarians, and there was the prospect of a rupture over the question of Commercial Treaties. The Porte had again been in communication with Dr. Vulkovitch, and had declared that it would not recognise either the Prince or his Government, and Reshid Bey, the Ottoman Commissioner, "fled from him in the street, rather than talk about the Railway. Bulgaria had become a national leper," he concluded. Madame Panitza was following the precedent formerly set by Mesdames Karavéloff and Ludskânoff, and petitioning the Foreign Agents to save her husband from ill-treatment,† and every sort of accusation

* Several of the conspirators were actively employed in the prosecution, and even up to the last tragic act in the drama, but I refrain from mentioning names in this connection.

† On the twentieth of April, I visited Panitza, in prison, to ascertain if there were any truth in the reports of his maltreatment. I found him tolerably cheerful, and confident that nothing would befall him. He denied absolutely that he had undergone any hardships whatever.

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was being brought against the Government in connection with the prisoners and their trial.

The Court Martial came off in due course, opening on the 15th May. It was held in some small barracks on the outskirts of the town, and the hearings were public. The prisoners in whom public attention centered were Panitza and Kalubkoff. The former maintained a quiet, soldierlike attitude, but the latter assumed a cynical indifference, and refused to answer any interrogatory except in Russian. The proceedings lasted for about a fortnight. The prosecution relied chiefly upon the documents seized at Panitza's house, but a mass of supplementary evidence was in their possession, not one third of which was ever produced. One of their principal objects was to prove the aiding and abetting of the conspiracy by Russia, and to this end they put in the famous Jacobson letters, which were afterwards published. These were sold to the Bulgarian Government by the Consulate Clerk, Jacobson. Their authenticity was immediately denied by Russia, but they bore unmistakeable signs of being too near the truth to be disregarded. They consisted of a series of despatches addressed to and from the Bucharest Agency. In almost every case the official number and date were appended, and if they were forgeries they were extremely clever ones. I learnt later, that out of the collection there were only two or three which were textual, but that the remainder were expanded from the Consular Archives. That is to say, Jacobson had copied out the numbers and the *résumés* of contents, which are very fully given in Russian Chanceries, with the dates and names of senders and recipients, and with these

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materials he had constructed the despatches, which, from his knowledge of the official style, and from his aptitude in invention, doubtless very closely resembled and fairly represented the originals.

The prisoners and their friends made no secret of their belief that the Government dared not execute them, and that if it tried to do so, Russia would intervene in their favour. Stambuloff, on the other hand, said that the verdict of the Court should be carried out, whatever it might be. This verdict was pronounced at two in the morning of the 30th of May, and whilst Kalubkoff was sentenced to imprisonment, and handed over to the Russian representative, Panitza was condemned to death. Even then, there were but few in Sofia who believed that the sentence would be carried out. Panitza refused to appeal, and was himself confident that his life was in no danger. His trust in Russia was, however, misplaced. There was some delay and formality about the confirmation of the sentence, and it was not until three or four weeks later that Prince Ferdinand signed the death-warrant on board his yacht, at Lom Palanka, before leaving for a short visit to Ebenthâl. The document was brought back to Stambuloff, who was acting as Regent, or Princely Lieutenant, by Major Agoura, and the sentence was executed immediately. The unfortunate Panitza was taken out in the morning to the camp at Bâli Effendi, and there shot. His fate served as a terror to his fellow-conspirators, and was thoroughly well merited, but much sympathy was felt for him on account of his past services and his lovable disposition, for, like many violent headstrong characters, he was frank and

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jovial, brave as a lion, and endowed with many good qualities. He was an intimate friend of Stambuloff, and a leading man of the Macedonian Party, both of which circumstances rendered it harder for the Premier to order his execution. There was, however, no choice in a matter which was one of life and death, not only for the prisoner, as ringleader of a most formidable conspiracy, but for Bulgaria. All personal feelings had to disappear in the presence of the national danger, and Stambuloff once more proved himself equal to the occasion. For it must be thoroughly well understood that during his term of office the Government was Stambuloff, and Stambuloff alone was the Government. Every decision of any moment was taken by him without consulting, except in a perfunctory manner, either his colleagues or the Prince. The Ministers were allowed to carry on the minor routine work of their Departments, and the Prince was permitted to sign decrees, to give dinner-parties in his Palace, or to go travelling over Europe, but the entire responsibility and management of Bulgarian affairs was undertaken and fulfilled by Stambuloff, on his own initiative and authority, and guided by his own judgment exclusively.

In the spring of 1888 Stambuloff married Mdlle. Polyxena Stantcheff, of Sistoff. This accomplished lady was brought up in Dresden, and is a good linguist, speaking English, French, and German with equal fluency. Though not very fond of society, Madame Stambuloff was often to be met in the saloons of the Foreign Diplomats, where she was quickly the centre of a little group, attracted as much by the animated *verve* of her

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MDME. STAMBULOFF.

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conversation, as by her great personal charms. On the occasions when the pair spent an evening with their friends, it was pleasant and amusing to see how Stambuloff threw off the burdens of State, and was as quickly surrounded by the ladies as his wife by the gentlemen, in opposite corners of the drawing-room.

Four children have been born, the eldest of whom, Stepan, died young. The second, Constantine, a fine little boy, is now six years old; the girl, Vera, is four; and baby Asen is one and a-half.

Madame Stambuloff is a most devoted wife and mother, and is a model whom all Bulgarian ladies look up to with affection and respect.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE BELTCHEFF AND VULKOVITCH MURDERS.

The system of political assassination—Stambuloff and Beltcheff—"Run, Beltcheff, run!"—The scene in the Cathedral—Horror at the crime—The assassins—A tough cypher—The warning to Dr. Vulkovitch—His murder—Stambuloff goes to Constantinople—His reception by the Sultan—Triumphant majority at the elections—The opening of the quarrel with the Prince—Stambuloff reporting to the Prince—The undated resignation—An insolent officer—How he was punished—The Prince and Petkoff—In the Red Saloon—Stambuloff's revenge.

WITH the execution of Panitza it was hoped that an end had been put, for ever, to military pronunciamentos in Bulgaria. And, in truth, the Committees lost heart at their repeated failures, and gave up, in despair, all hope of raising another revolution. They did not, however, on this account, cease from molesting; and finding it impossible to get rid of the Prince in any other fashion, they decided to assassinate him. One of their principal agents was a certain Rizoff, who had been arrested, together with Panitza, but had been released for lack of evidence. He then went to Belgrade, where he published a full account of the plot, and of his own share in it.*

Together with other Macedonians, he organised small bands of cut-throats, who were to be the instruments in

* Rizoff is now in Sofia, editor of the newspaper, the *Mlada Bulgaria.*

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the new system, that of political assassination. Some of the most resolute ruffians were sent to Sofia, originally with instructions to kill the Prince; but after deliberation, they changed their minds, and it was thought that it might be better if they were to murder Stambuloff, as they would thus get rid of him, and at the same time frighten the Prince into abdicating, or else leave him without his main support. This, at least, was supposed to be the line of reasoning they took, though it is quite possible that mere Macedonian revenge—the vendetta spirit for the death of Panitza, prompted them.

Stambuloff was not in ignorance of these plots, being very well served by his spies; but he doubted if anybody would be found bold enough to shoot at him, and he took no precautions whatever, beyond being generally followed by a policeman when he took his walks.

At the end of 1890 there was another change of Ministry. M. Grékoff replaced Dr. Stransky, as Minister for Foreign Affairs; and M. Beltcheff took over the Finance. Beltcheff was no politician, belonged to no party, and was a simple-hearted honest public servant. He was so gentle and kindly in his nature, that he had not an enemy in all Bulgaria. He had formerly been Secretary-General in the same Ministry, and when he was promoted to the head of it, there was a good deal of important work going on. Amongst other questions, was that of the Bulgarian Government taking possession of the Vakarel-Bellova Railway, and the payment of two millions to be made by it. When this subject came before the Council of Ministers, Beltcheff was unable to give some figures asked for by Grékoff, or one or other of

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his colleagues. It became necessary, in order to learn the details, to call in an employé before the Council, a most unusual proceeding, which several of the Ministers objected to very strongly, and they threw the blame upon Beltcheff. The fact was, that Beltcheff had not yet chosen a Secretary-General to fill the place left vacant by his promotion, and was working twelve and fourteen hours a day in an attempt to fulfil the double duties of Minister and Secretary. The other Ministers, after this incident, charged Stambuloff, as Beltcheff's oldest friend —they had been at school together—to press upon him the advisability of naming a Secretary forthwith. Beltcheff was of a very sensitive disposition, and Stambuloff cast about for a favourable chance of putting the case before him in a manner not to offend him. After the Council, on the 27th March, 1891, most of the Ministers adjourned to the Café Panakh, and sat there for an hour or so, over coffee and cigarettes. About eight o'clock the party broke up, and Grékoff asked Stambuloff to walk home with him. He replied that he would go with Beltcheff, in order to talk with him over the subject they had agreed upon. It was eight o'clock, perhaps a little later, as the two Ministers left the Café. They were both of about the same height and build, wearing the same coloured clothes, and otherwise resembling one another, the difference in complexion between the fair Beltcheff and dark Stambuloff not being visible in the dusk.

As they left, Stambuloff had Beltcheff on his right; but as he was in the habit of carrying a heavy stick in that hand, after a few paces he crossed, so that he was on Beltcheff's right. This move saved his life, and cost that

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of his friend. They sauntered down the path, talking seriously of Beltcheff's position, and Stambuloff was just proposing his own secretary, Lukânoff, for the place of Secretary-General, when a pistol-shot rang out. With the knowledge that his assassins were upon him, and that the threats which he had disbelieved in were being put into execution, Stambuloff fled, shouting out, "Run, Beltcheff, run after me." Before he had gone fifty yards he heard two more shots, after the first of which came an exultant cry, "Stambuloff is killed!" and then silence. Entering the fourth Uchastuk (guard-house), Stambuloff hastily summoned four or five gendarmes, and returned to the scene of the catastrophe. There he found the body of Beltcheff, lying just inside the gate of the garden. Instead of following Stambuloff down the middle of the road, he had evidently turned into the public garden, hoping, perhaps, to find shelter amongst the trees and shrubs. A struggle had apparently taken place here, and the second shot had pierced his heart. The first one had passed through his right arm, merely causing a flesh wound. A hue and cry was raised at once, but not a trace could be discovered of the murderers. The excitement and horror in Sofia was intense at this dastardly crime, and the public joined in the search that night, during which few people in the capital went to rest. A message was sent to Madame Beltcheff that her husband was detained on business, but she grew so anxious, that at midnight Stambuloff himself went to break the news to her. At his first words she guessed the truth, and broke into violent reproaches. The corpse was not carried home till early the next morning. That day the house

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was filled with sympathising friends, Stambuloff himself staying for several hours in the reception-room; and the day after the coffin was taken to the Cathedral, the Premier walking as chief mourner. The scene after the close of the burial service, when Madame Beltcheff approached the bier to print a last kiss on the face of the murdered man, was most pathetic; and the great beauty of the bereaved widow lent additional force to the picture, as she threw herself across the coffin, sobbing and repeating her husband's name, till the feelings of all present were strung almost past endurance. It was like a most powerfully-acted tragedy; but here the emotion was real, and tears were streaming from every eye as her relations tore her away, and carried her senseless form out of the church. There was only one universal sentiment of horror and craving for vengeance, but it was not easy to satisfy. Knowing, however, those who were likely to be implicated in a crime of this nature, Stambuloff summarily arrested a dozen of the worst characters, and through them he learnt the facts.

The assassination had been perpetrated by five individuals.

First, Denu Teufectchieff, who had come from Macedonia for the purpose. He was the youngest of three notorious brothers, and was only eighteen years of age. During the preliminary enquiry, he died in the hospital of Alexandroff, according to the medical certificate, of consumption. It was, however, stated at the time that he was cruelly beaten and tortured to make him confess the names of his confederates; and the Prefect of Police, Lukânoff, is now under arrest and bail on this charge.

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After hearing a great deal of evidence on both sides, I am inclined to think that, acting under the impulse of rage, the subordinate police officials probably did torture Denu, and that this torture, inflicted upon a weak constitution, led to his death. Impartiality calls for the severest censure upon this brutality, which recalls the old days of the Inquisition, and which is supposed to be a thing of the past centuries. The same impartiality, however, makes it a duty to remark that the use of violence towards prisoners is not confined to Bulgaria, nor in Bulgaria to this particular case. Stambuloff is now being virulently attacked for the death of Denu, which is only natural since his brother and accomplice is at present in Sofia, and in high favour with the Government. Whether he or his lieutenant, Lukânoff, ordered, or had knowledge of, the maltreatment of Denu is very difficult to determine, as there has been the hardest swearing on both sides. It would scarcely be becoming to offer any opinion on the case, as it is, at the time of writing, still *sub judice*. The second assassin was Mikhail Duressna,* also from Macedonia. During the struggle with Beltcheff, Nicola Teufectchieff's shot passed through Duressna's right hand. The wound was sufficiently painful and conspicuous to prevent Duressna from flying the country, and he took refuge in the house of a Macedonian Greek. He remained with him for a month, till his hand had healed, and then went to Servia. After he had left, the Greek, who would not betray his guest, told the authorities the story. The third was Nicola Teufectchieff, above mentioned. The fourth was the ex-Prefect of Trn,

* Generally known as Hailio from Ressna.

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Kozâroff. These three are now in Sofia, presumably engaged in a similar business. The fifth was Georgi Velikoff. At the time of the trial there was not sufficient proof to convict him in the first degree, and he was condemned to eighteen years' penal servitude. On the 30th May, 1895, when Stambuloff fell, he was released from prison, and shortly afterwards this murderer was appointed Procureur-General of Lovtcha, where he is now officiating. Very severe measures were now taken by Stambuloff against all suspicious vagabonds, who, in order to save themselves from arrest, fled to Servia, Constantinople, and Odessa; and by the end of 1891, there were probably not ten left in the whole of Bulgaria. This was styled by the Opposition the Reign of Terror, but if ever a Government had reason to cleanse the country of conspirators and professional assassins, that Government was the one of which Stambuloff was the head.

The Terror being established in Bulgaria, the conspirators were bound to seek a fresh field for their operations, and not daring to show their faces at Sofia, they conceived the plan of striking at the Government through its agents abroad. The most capable man of these, who, unfortunately for himself was also known as one of Stambuloff's most trusty lieutenants, was Dr. Vulkovitch, the Bulgarian agent at Constantinople. He was a man of great intelligence, a true patriot, an upright honourable servant of the State, and a blameless husband and father. Such a victim was just the one to please the murder party.

Towards the close of 1891, the Servian authorities seized in the Post-office a suspicious letter, and forwarded

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it to Stambuloff. It was found to be addressed from Odessa, by Nicola Teufectchieff, to a certain Boni Georgieff. It was written in a very complicated cypher, over which Stambuloff puzzled in vain for a week. He had considerable experience of these codes, and he wished, if possible, to keep the contents of the letter to himself. Failing, however, in his endeavours, he was obliged to call in a telegraph-clerk named Tomoff, who had the reputation of being able to find the key to any cypher. Stambuloff locked him up with the letter for three days, at the end of which time he had succeeded in writing it out *en clair*. It gave the details of a plot to assassinate Doctor Vulkovitch, and named those who had undertaken the crime. Stambuloff at once sent a copy of it to Constantinople, and begged Vulkovitch to inform the Turkish authorities, and to take every personal precaution. The Doctor replied that it was useless for him to try and safeguard himself from such men, and if he was to be assassinated he probably would be. It was a question of fate or providence.

Soon after, in the last days of February, 1892, as he was walking home he was attacked from behind, and fell to the ground with a knife between his shoulders, another victim to the pitiless Committees. This abominable act, the unprovoked murder of a perfectly innocent and harmless Government official, merely because he was one, revolted the whole nation, and anything to do with Russophilism or Slav Committees was held in abhorrence until the day when Stambuloff fell, and the whole crew whom he had hunted out swooped down once more upon Bulgaria—conspirators and assassins, branded and confessed.

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In the trial, which took place at Constantinople, it was shown that the plot was organised by Naoum Teufectchieff, and carried out by him with his brother Nicola, with Shishmânoff, an employé in the Russian P.O. at Constantinople, and with a politician concerned in the kidnapping of Prince Alexander, who occupies at the present moment an important position in the Sofia Cabinet.

The years 1891 and 1892 were principally marked by these two hideous murders, which only served the contrary purpose to that at which they aimed, by alienating the sympathies of Bulgaria from their instigators, and by rallying all that was best in Bulgaria round Stambuloff, whose authority was growing more and more firm and wide-reaching. The Prince, it was true, felt that he was kept rather too much in the background after three years' reign, and was beginning to chafe under the dictatorial rule of his Premier, who acted as if he alone governed the country. In the commencement, His Highness was content to let it be so; but he considered that he had by this time acquired sufficient experience to warrant his having a voice in the direction of affairs, and from time to time he kicked somewhat against the pricks. On the whole, though, they were still on fairly good terms; and as Prince Ferdinand was now thinking more of his marriage than anything else; and as on this subject he and Stambuloff were at one, and he relied upon Stambuloff's power to effect the change in the Constitution, they continued to work in harmony.

In the summer of 1892 the Prince went to Europe

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for his wooing, and left Stambuloff, as usual, Regent. In order to repose himself, the Premier removed to Varna to pass a month or two there; and in August he received a letter from M. Dimitroff, who had replaced Dr. Vulkovitch, that he was charged to say that His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, hearing that Stambuloff was in want of a change of air, would be pleased to see him, should he go to Constantinople. This invitation chimed in with a long-standing and dearly-cherished wish; and as soon as the Prince returned, Stambuloff chartered the Austrian-Lloyd steamer, the *Aglae*, and started without the knowledge of anybody in Bulgaria except His Highness.

He arrived on Wednesday, and was at once handsomely received by the Grand Vizier, Djevad Pasha.

He went to stay at the house of M. Dimitroff, at Buyukdereh, on the Bosphorus, close to the Russian Embassy. The prospect of his being received by the Sultan was eminently distasteful to Russia, who tried every means to prevent it. M. Nelidoff was absent from Constantinople, and therefore she applied to the French Embassy for support. On the appointed Friday, Stambuloff attended the Selamlik; and whilst waiting in the ante-chamber M. Cambon arrived, and asking for an audience, remained for two hours vainly endeavouring to prevail upon His Majesty to alter his decision. What curious reflections must have passed through Stambuloff's mind during this delay! He could remember his first two visits to the Ottoman capital, fifteen years before, when he came as an outlaw and conspirator against Turkey, whom he then considered as his bitterest foe.

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He was patronised by the cavass, or doorkeeper of the Russian Embassy, and it was with a Russian passport that he left. Now he was received with honour as the head of a friendly vassal State, and the Embassies of Russia and France together were powerless to keep him from the presence of his Suzerain. It was, indeed, a change of which he might be proud. When the French Ambassador, baffled in his quest, withdrew, Stambuloff was ushered in. Though he speaks Turkish fluently, he availed himself of the interpreter, in order to give himself time to consider the Sultan's remarks and his own answers. The interview was a long and cordial one, and in its course Stambuloff assured His Majesty of the sincere and loyal wish of Bulgaria to preserve the most friendly relations with Turkey, and emphasized the necessity of such relations for their mutual self-defence. At its close the Sultan expressed his great satisfaction at having seen the Bulgarian statesman, and regretted that, under the existing political circumstances, it was impossible to bestow an order upon him. He presented him, however, with a gold *tabatière*, set in diamonds, and named a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Household to act as aide-de-camp in attendance, putting also a steam launch, and carriages and horses at his disposal, and altogether treating him as a highly distinguished guest. Being in Constantinople, Stambuloff took the opportunity of calling upon the Exarch, whom he had not seen since 1881. These two enlightened patriots, who, however they might differ—and they differed much, in various details and points of view—were agreed in their striving after the weal of their country, were

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PRINCESS FERDINAND.

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not long in coming to a complete understanding, both on the impending change of Article 38 of the Constitution, and on the general policy advocated by Stambuloff. On the whole he had every reason to be pleased with his visit, and he carried away with him the conviction that Bulgaria had now a firm friend in the Sultan, a conviction first acquired during his audience, and afterwards confirmed by subsequent conversations with the Grand Vizier and Turkish Ministers.

He returned by rail, after keeping the *Aglae* waiting till the last moment, in order to put any possible conspirators off the scent, in case they might plot some fresh attempt upon him.

In March, 1893, the betrothal of Prince Ferdinand to Princess Marie Louise of Parma was announced, and Stambuloff went with the Prince to fetch back the new Bulgarian Princess. M. Givkoff was left, this time, as Regent. The fact of the Prince and his powerful Minister daring to leave Bulgaria together, created some astonishment and much comment in Europe, but they felt that the era of conspiracy was past, and that the Panslavist snake was too severely scotched to be feared. At Vienna, Stambuloff was received both by the Emperor and Count Kalnoky. Europe had heard so much of the man, that all were anxious to see and hear him. He told me afterwards that he had been much struck by the very intimate knowledge of all that had passed in Bulgaria, and the accurate estimate of the situation possessed by both the Emperor and his Minister. He talked long with Count Kalnoky, especially as regarded the future, and the possibility of a recognition of the Prince, and the Count

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seemed to approve the policy adopted since the Regency. With the Emperor Franz Joseph Stambuloff remained more than an hour, but the subject of their conversation did not transpire.*

From Vienna the Bulgarian Court moved on to Pianove, where the marriage was celebrated, and Stambuloff preceded the Royal pair to their new home, in order to prepare the elections for the Grand Assembly, which was to change the Constitution by permitting the baptism of the Prince's issue in the Catholic faith. He may be considered, at this time, as being at the zenith of his power and popularity. The Assembly met and passed the proposed alteration in Article 38, and the Prince and his bride landed at Sistoff. They were greeted with joyful enthusiasm by all classes, and the future looked brighter than it had ever done before in the history of Bulgaria.

Stambuloff seized this opportunity of offering his resignation to the Prince. He supported his request to be relieved of office by saying that with the celebration of the marriage, and the change in the Constitution, he had rendered his best services to His Highness and the country, and had earned a rest. Prince Ferdinand, however, cordially begged him not to spoil his honeymoon by deserting his post at such a moment, and Stambuloff gave in. It was a decided mistake. Had he remained firm, the Prince would have been compelled to choose a successor from the Opposition, and the contrast

* Amongst other questions put by the Emperor was a query as to whether Stambuloff fancied his policy was based upon solid foundations. "Sire," was the answer, "if Zankoff himself were now to take my place, he would have to follow my line."

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would have been so marked, that Stambuloff would have returned later to office, refreshed by repose, and with all his old popularity still about him. The commands of the Prince were, nevertheless, so kindly and genially put, that he sacrificed himself once more for his master.

After the closure of the Grand Assembly came the elections for the Legislative Chamber. Wishing to see the real measure of his popularity, Stambuloff gave orders to all his party to abstain from using the slightest pressure, and to allow the elections to be absolutely free. As I have said previously, such a thing as really free elections are impossible in Bulgaria, but little or no Government coercion was used on this occasion. The result was, that out of one hundred and sixty Deputies, only fifteen or sixteen of the Opposition were elected, and it was evident that he had the whole of Bulgaria at his back.

Proud of this proof of the confidence of the nation, Stambuloff telegraphed, on Sunday, to the Prince to inform him of his victory. It was not till the following Friday that he received a very cold telegram of congratulation in reply. This delay, and the tone of the the answer, made Stambuloff reflect, and prepare for combat.

On the 27th October, the Legislative Chamber was convoked, and he resolved to complete his thankless work for the Dynasty by raising the Prince's Civil List from 600,000 to one million francs per annum. This he did because he knew how marriage increased domestic expenses, having lately married, himself, on 29th May,

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1888; but his action was sharply criticised by many of his party, and it was still one more shred of his own coat that he gave to cover the Prince.

The Opposition were already aware of the tension which had sprung up between the Palace and the Premier, and their hopes revived. Seeing that they could do nothing separately, all the hostile elements coalesced, and founded a paper called the *Svobodno Slovo*, which was daily filled with virulent attacks against Stambuloff. It furthermore pretended that it had the support of the Palace, but this Stambuloff did not at first credit, though later on he was forced to admit its probability. The United Opposition was headed by four of Stambuloff's ex-Ministers—Stoiloff, Natchevitch, Stransky, and Radoslâvoff—together with Colonel Petroff, Chief of the Staff, and the Prince's favourite.

Not being able to strike the Government through the people, they contrived to reach the ear of the Prince through Colonel Petroff and Doctor Stantcheff, His Highness's Secretary, and there was no longer any secret of the ill-will which had grown up between Prince Ferdinand and Stambuloff.

It is by no means easy to disentangle the various motives of the quarrel, which was scarcely more reputable to one side than to the other. It is certain that Prince Ferdinand had, for long, been impatiently chafing under the tutelage of his headstrong Premier. He feared him, however, too much to venture on a duel before his marriage. By that act, though, he felt himself much strengthened, and by the birth of an heir, the infant Prince Boris, on the 30th January, 1894, far more so still.

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Had it not been for the illness of the Princess after her *accouchement*, which compelled the Prince to take her abroad, there can be little doubt but that Stambuloff would have been immediately dismissed after that happy event, and the country and the Prince would have been saved from the subsequent scandals. The Prince, himself, was frequently provoked, almost past endurance, by the rough and insulting tone of Stambuloff; and he was surrounded by a crowd of hungry aspirants for Government posts, who adroitly played upon his *amour propre*, and were never tired of exhorting him to throw off the yoke of Stambuloff, and take up his own sceptre. Such counsels flattered his vanity and touched his pride, and culminated, finally, in the fall of the Premier. In tracing the quarrel through its stages, I shall abstain from comment, and leave the reader to form his own judgment on incidents which can only be sincerely regretted, for the sake of all parties.

The following characteristic anecdotes will, perhaps, serve better than any "appreciations" to illustrate the manner in which the quarrel was conducted.

Stambuloff was in the habit of going to the Palace to hand in his report to the Prince on public affairs once or twice a week, at ten o'clock in the morning. He received information, from one of the officers implicated, that Colonel Petroff had arranged, with a dozen of his comrades, that the Prince, instead of receiving Stambuloff in the morning, as usual, should, under some pretext, command him to present himself in the evening, and keep him there till nine o'clock. The Prince was then to ask him to sign his resignation, and if he refused, Colonel

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Petroff and his officers were to come in and, at the point of the sword and the muzzle of the revolver, to compel him. Word was to be sent to Madame Stambuloff that the Prince had kept Stambuloff to dinner, and, before morning, a new Ministry was to be formed, and the resignation of Stambuloff announced. The repentant conspirator entreated him on no account to go to the Palace in the evening, but Stambuloff reassured him, and told him to continue to pretend that he was with the Petroff party, and play out the game. He, however, went to several of the Diplomatic Agents, and informed them of the plot, so that they might know what had happened, should it succeed in part.

Surely enough, the following week the Prince summoned him for the evening. He went, but only stayed two hours, declining to wait longer. A second time the same order came, and the same farce was gone through. On the third occasion Stambuloff sent word that he was ill, and could not come; and likewise on the fourth. Finally, however, he thought it was time to put an end to such summonses, and went after his dinner. Upon entering the Prince embraced him affectionately, kissing him on both cheeks, and inquired after his health. After an hour or two spent in discussing current business, Stambuloff, fixing his terrible eye upon his master, said: "Your Highness, I hear strange rumours in the town. They say that I am to be asked to report at night, as I have been asked five times, and that Your Highness, one evening, is to keep me late, sending word to my wife, to quiet any uneasiness she may and would feel. Then you are to ask me for my resignation, and if I do not sign it,

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Petroff and So-and-So and So-and-So" — mentioning several names of those in the secret—"are to come in armed, and force me."

The Prince burst into a torrent of denials that if any such villainous scheme existed he was no party to it, but Stambuloff, with a deprecating gesture, drew out a sheet of paper from his breast pocket, and went on—

"Your Highness has not learnt in seven years to know me if you think I could be forced into signing anything. You might cut off my hands and feet, but you could never compel me to do what I do now voluntarily, and of my own free will. Here is my resignation, signed and undated. Take it, and keep it by you, if you think it will help you. From this moment I am no longer your Minister, and I warn you, Sire, that if you treat your new one as you have treated me, your throne is not worth a louis."

Prince Ferdinand wished to continue his protest, but Stambuloff saluted him and walked out. No further notice was ever taken of this incident, which, however, can scarcely have improved the mutual feelings of the two adversaries, for such they now were.

On another occasion the Prince drove up in his carriage to Stambuloff's house, in the evening, in a state of considerable agitation. Stambuloff was surprised at this unusual visit, and fearing something very serious had occurred, begged his Highness to enlighten him. It then appeared that the Prince had been driving out in a closed coupé along the Orkhanieh Road, when he met two officers on horseback, Majors Popoff and Paprikoff. They gave the customary salute, but after they had

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passed, the Prince lifted up the little blind in the back of his carriage, and noticed that Popoff after saluting made the insulting Russian gesture of spitting back after the coupé. Prince Ferdinand was furious at this insolence, and came to ask Stambuloff how he would advise him to punish the culprit. Undoubtedly, the wisest course would have been to take no notice of conduct which had been discovered in this wise, but the Prince insisted on giving Major Popoff a lesson.

"Very well, Your Highness," said Stambuloff. "You will go back to the Palace and summon Popoff, who is in charge of Ordnance Stores. Under pretence of requiring information upon certain details, you will keep him for two hours answering you."

"And what then?"

"Nothing more, Your Highness."

"What! no punishment?"

"That is all, Sire!"

The Prince did as he was advised. Major Popoff, conscious of his offence, and fancying it had been noticed, was in a white terror for two long hours under the merciless cross-questioning of the Prince, but when he was dismissed without reprimand he could not quite understand it. He went to Stambuloff, and told him the whole story over again, expressing his astonishment at the Prince's sudden thirst for information, and saying what a fright he had been kept in during the interrogatory.

Stambuloff did not enlighten him, but the next time he saw the Prince, he reported that the punishment had been equal to the offence.

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One more instance of Stambuloff's methods before resuming the story.

The President of the Chamber was M. Petkoff, formerly Mayor of Sofia. He was a man of somewhat blunt manner and rough exterior, and the Prince had for long treated him with scant courtesy. Suddenly, however, a change came over his manner, and he began to take a great deal of pains to show civilities to the President.

One day he called him to the Palace, and took him to the Red Saloon. Here he ostentatiously closed the doors, and button-holing his visitor, spoke as follows: "Here am I, Prince Ferdinand of Cobourg, and here are you, Petkoff, President of the Bulgarian Chamber. Above us is Almighty God, and round us are the four walls. What I am about to say to you now must go no further." He then began urging Petkoff to raise a party in the Chamber to get rid of Stambuloff, who was ruining the country, and who was the chief stumbling-block in the way of a reconciliation with Russia. Petkoff was much embarrassed at this most unexpected proposal, but replied that in the first place Stambuloff was his oldest and best-tried friend, to whom he owed everything, and that it would be most dishonest of him to head a faction against his Chief; and secondly, that any such attempt was predestined to failure, for Stambuloff was too strong, and anybody who tried to resist him would only be annihilated. Prince Ferdinand was naturally vexed at this rebuff, and entreated Petkoff to say nothing about it, but, as a matter of course, the first thing he did was to repeat the whole of the interview to Stambuloff.

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Shortly after this, Stantcheff spoke to Petkoff in the same sense, and was met with the same answer. Stantcheff then fell ill with typhus fever, and was in some considerable danger on the day when Stambuloff went to the Palace to make his report. He found Prince Ferdinand much distressed, pacing up and down the room, and exclaiming that his poor Stantcheff was dying. This gave Stambuloff his opportunity.

"No, sire, he will not die; and I pray God he may not, as I have an account to settle with him."

"An account to settle with Stantcheff!" rejoined the Prince, in surprise. "What can you have against him; such a good, nice fellow!"

Then Stambuloff began—

"This, sire—he makes unwarranted and shameful use of Your Highness's name. Imagine, you, who are the essence of chivalry and the soul of honour, and who deign to trust me as your second self, that not long ago this Stantcheff, whom you also trust, called my best friend, Petkoff, to him."

Here he paused, and the Prince grew uneasy. He went on—

"Stantcheff took Petkoff up to the Red Saloon, and used these words: 'Here am I, Stantcheff, and here are you, Petkoff; above us is Almighty God, and round us are these four walls.' He then proceeded, in Your Highness's name, to make the basest and most infamous proposal to Petkoff to forswear his allegiance to me and to play the traitor to his Chief."

The Prince protested that it was impossible, and Stambuloff having enjoyed his scene, smiled ironically

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and said that all things were possible, and changed the conversation.

It can easily be understood that skirmishes like these were not calculated to heal the breach. Stambuloff plainly saw that the Prince would stick at nothing to cause his ignominious downfall, and the Prince was provoked at the surety with which his plans were discovered, and the insolent contempt with which they were treated. The end could scarcely be far off when such a point had been reached.

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CHAPTER X.

THE FALL OF STAMBULOFF.

Appointment of Savoff Minister of War—His conjugal griefs—He accuses Slavkoff—Stambuloff obtains an Iradé for Macedonian Bishops—Popular delight at this victory—Stambuloff resigns again—The Prince refuses to accept—The challenge from Savoff—The protocol of the seconds—Savoff's letter to the Prince—"The act of a churl"—Stambuloff sends his resignation by letter to the Prince—National demonstrations against his leaving office—The mob assisted by the soldiers—The Princely Rescript—Stambuloff goes to the Palace—The rabble spit upon him—Stambuloff's house in a state of siege—The interview in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*—Stambuloff's great mistake.

TO resume the thread of our story. We left the Opposition striving to undermine Stambuloff's position with the help of the Palace, as represented chiefly by Colonel Petroff. This officer was an ambitious and energetic Chief of the Staff, who aimed at becoming what he now is—Minister of War. He had been a favourite of Prince Alexander, and was now in great favour with Prince Ferdinand. When Colonel Mutkûroff died, the candidature of Colonel Petroff was put forward for the Ministry, and warmly supported by the Prince, but Stambuloff refused to accept it, and appointed Major Savoff, a man of brilliant organising powers, and who kept aloof from politics. Prince Alexander had always

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tried to make the Minister of War a sort of Head Clerk, or Intendant, reserving to himself the real power for promotions and appointments. A tendency in this direction was now showing itself in Prince Ferdinand, and as Stambuloff disapproved of it entirely, he and Savoff drew up a law for the re-organisation of the army on constitutional bases, and managed to carry it, in spite of the most active opposition from the Palace party. During the course of this campaign the Prince openly demanded Savoff's dismissal, and Stambuloff, no less than three times, was forced to play the trump card, which so often succeeded, of offering his own resignation if his Minister was taken from him.

Major Savoff was married to a niece of M. Gueshoff, and he was savagely jealous about her. The *ménage* was a most unhappy one, and the husband would generally lock up his wife when away from home. In 1893 the Petroff party, who wished to get rid of Savoff by making him the object of some glaring scandal, put it into his head that M. Slavkoff was his wife's lover. The two men had never been friends, and the hint was sufficient to set the morbid jealousy of Savoff in a flame. Blind with rage, he came to Stambuloff to complain. Stambuloff replied that, though Slavkoff was no saint, he was perfectly certain that in this instance he was entirely innocent. Savoff, however, swore that his information was sure, and gave various details, into which, in order to calm him, Stambuloff promised to enquire. The secret police soon revealed the fact that, however flighty the lady might be, there was no ground for suspicion against Slavkoff. Stambuloff told this to

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Savoff, who, nevertheless, doggedly adhered to his belief, and declared that he would no longer sit in the same Ministry with Slavkoff, and that Stambuloff must choose between them.

The Premier retorted that for such a reason he would not throw over either one or the other, and Savoff went away furious. In fact, he now cast himself into the arms of the Opposition, which thus gained its point. In April, 1894, Stantcheff left Sofia to visit the Prince at Ebenthal, and Savoff commissioned him to ask His Highness' approval of a duel between him and Slavkoff. When Stambuloff heard of this he was very angry, called him up, and told him such scandals were altogether contrary to the habits and customs of Bulgaria, that they could only reflect the greatest discredit upon the name of Minister and on the Cabinet, and that as it had already been proved that Slavkoff was quite innocent of any offence, he would have no duel fought. Stantcheff then returned and proposed to Savoff, as he could not fight Slavkoff, to call out Stambuloff, being tolerably certain that the fiery temper of the latter would not resist provocation, and that thus two birds would be killed with one stone. But whilst all this quarrelling had been going on amongst the Ministers in Sofia, Stambuloff had scored a great diplomatic triumph at Constantinople. Whilst the Prince was away, he approached the Sultan with a request for the appointment of two more Bulgarian Bishops in Macedonia, for the Bulgarian schools to be placed on the same footing as those of Greece, and for the formal recognition of some forty Bulgarian Communes. His Majesty the Sultan, probably under the

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favourable impression left by his interview with Stambuloff, issued an Iradé granting all these privileges, the news of which was received all over Bulgaria with national rejoicing.

From every town and village came telegrams and deputations to Stambuloff, begging him to transmit to the Sultan the thanks of Bulgaria for his Imperial favours, and a monster meeting was held in Sofia, culminating in a demonstration, in which nearly ten thousand took part, in front of his house. In this demonstration all parties took a share, and a leading Zankoffist, M. Makedonsky, in a speech which lasted for an hour, expressed the gratitude of the nation, and especially of the Macedonian Bulgars, to Stambuloff, for the success he had gained. Stambuloff appeared at the window, and was greeted with tumultuous cheers; and nobody who saw the reception given to him, could have guessed how the same crowd would treat him in a few short weeks. This meeting passed a resolution requesting Stambuloff to telegraph their gratitude to the Sultan, which he immediately did, and was honoured by a most gracious reply from Yildiz Kiosque. This direct interchange of telegrams was the more conspicuous, since the Sultan had never yet telegraphed to Prince Ferdinand in answer to the various messages he had from time to time despatched to Constantinople. The diplomatic success Stambuloff was also the more marked, as it had been won by himself, without the support of any foreign Ambassador; and the Sultan, by granting the privileges asked for on his own initiative, proved his confidence in the good faith of the vassal State. The mistrust

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which had always existed seemed to have disappeared, and everything augured well for the future prosperity and progress of the Bulgarians under Turkish rule. The access of popularity which Stambuloff secured by this move was, however, far from pleasing to the Palace, who saw that it would make his ejection from office more difficult, and the Prince was especially annoyed that the glory of it should all have been taken by Stambuloff in his absence.*

The day after his return, on the 26th April, Stambuloff called on the Prince, and tendered the resignation of the whole Cabinet. A resignation, however, just after the Macedonian triumph, would have done Stambuloff no harm, and the Prince refused to accept it. Stambuloff declared that the Savoff scandal was too disgraceful, and he wished to be relieved of any connection with it. The Prince rejoined that the best thing to do would be to turn out Savoff, the original aim and object of the whole intrigue of the Palace party from the first. Stambuloff was not inclined to do this, but when he reached home he found, to his astonishment, a challenge from Savoff for himself. This was too

* His Highness first heard of the Iradé at Belgrade, on his way back to Sofia. When he arrived, and Stambuloff met him, the Minister expected to be congratulated on his success, but the Prince talked on indifferent subjects. At last he said, "You have not thanked me yet for the present I sent you from Vienna." Stambuloff had received no present, but thinking that perhaps the Prince had sent him a snuff-box, or some other trifle, which had miscarried, he answered that he begged to be pardoned, but that nothing had reached him. "Eh? And your Macedonian Bishops?" rejoined the Prince. Stambuloff was too amused to be angry at this joke.

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ridiculous, but his adversaries had rightly reckoned upon his mood, and he accepted immediately. He named as his seconds the Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Grékoff and Colonel Kutintcheff, a stern soldier, who had presided over the Panitza Court-martial, and who had an unsullied reputation. Major Savoff was represented by Lieutenant-Colonel Kovâtcheff and Major Petronoff, both men of honour and unobjectionable. The seconds met to discuss the matter, and after two hours' deliberation, drew up a Protocol, in which they declared, that as the accusation brought by Savoff was without a shadow of foundation, there were no grounds for his seeking satisfaction from Stambuloff. His seconds, consequently, returned their mandate and withdrew. Hereupon Savoff appointed two fresh ones—M. Radoslâvoff and Captain Mitoff. At the same time he wrote an abject letter to Prince Ferdinand, begging His Highness to protect him and his little child from the ferocious Stambuloff. The Prince forwarded this letter to Stambuloff, with a request not to harm Savoff. Meanwhile Stambuloff's seconds declared that, though it was contrary to all precedent to name fresh seconds after the incident had been regularly declared closed by a Protocol, yet Stambuloff was ready to fight, if any honourable and impartial men decided that he owed reparation to Savoff. They refused, however, to treat with such notorious personal enemies of their principal as Radoslâvoff and Mitoff. Directly afterwards Savoff sent in his resignation, and asked for his passport to be given him for Vienna. No difficulties were placed in his way, and he left. The foregoing is the briefest

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possible account of this disgraceful comedy, which led to such grave consequences.

On Savoff's resignation, Stambuloff again insisted upon his own, and was again refused. He then wished to appoint Colonel Marinoff as Minister of War, but Petroff was backed by the Prince, and having got rid of Savoff, was quite determined to take his place. A most obstinate struggle now began. The Prince, following the traditional lead in such cases, said that rather than have Marinoff as Minister of War, he would abdicate, and Stambuloff declared that as Petroff was his sworn enemy, he preferred to resign rather than have him in the Cabinet. Neither would give way, and the crisis was acute. Finally Petroff said, that if he took the portfolio, he would promise to work honestly and loyally with Stambuloff. A Council was held at Stambuloff's house, lasting from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m., and he let himself be over-persuaded.

The next day Petroff came to see him, and repeated his assurance—that he wished to let bygones be bygones, and to act in harmony with the Premier. And the Prince had the great satisfaction of signing the decree appointing his favourite Minister of War. It was his first victory over Stambuloff, and the latter, by giving in to his friends instead of following his own judgment in refusing to admit Petroff, committed a great error. He probably thought that, strong in the Chamber, and with the nation behind him, he would soon be able to free himself from his new colleague, but he had omitted the Prince from his calculations. He had so long been accustomed to overrule Prince Ferdinand, that he hardly

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realised the situation, when His Highness declined to cede any longer. In dealing with his fellow-countrymen as adversaries, Stambuloff had the prestige of the Prince and the Constitution at his back. In fighting the Prince, though, the Constitution was on the other side, and when once His Highness, by the threat of abdication, had carried his point and found his strength, he was not the man to stop there. He had writhed so long under the galling restraint of his Premier, that he was impatient to cast it off and be, at last, Prince of Bulgaria, in fact as well as in name. With Petroff in the Cabinet, his wedge was planted in the heart of the oak. There was an enemy in the house, and one who was fully alive to the possibilities of the situation.

The end came even sooner than the Opposition had hoped. Their organs, emboldened by the presence of Colonel Petroff, opened fire upon Stambuloff with increased virulence, and, amongst numberless calumnies, insinuated that he had refused to fight with Savoff out of cowardice, and had spirited him away out of the country. Stambuloff was able to turn a deaf, contemptuous ear to most of their accusations, but an imputation on his personal courage, which really required less rebuttal than any other, was too much for him. He retorted by publishing, in the *Svoboda*, the letter Savoff had addressed to the Prince, clearly showing that if either party had been afraid it was not he. When the *Svoboda*, containing this letter, appeared, Stantcheff telegraphed the news to the Prince, who was then in Vienna, and His Highness replied, *en clair*, that if Stambuloff had done this, it was a *gemeiner That*—the

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action of a churl, and that Stantcheff might go and tell Stambuloff so. It is unnecessary to say that Stantcheff carefully avoided going near the irate Premier, who had had a copy of the telegram sent to him from the office as soon as it had arrived. After reading it, he sat down and wrote a long letter to the Prince. He began by recapitulating all the *mal entendus* which had taken place, the perpetual scheming to get rid of him by underhand means, whilst every open offer of his resignation was politely refused, and the encouragement given to the Opposition, who never ceased boasting that they had the Prince on their side. It was perfectly clear that all confidence between them was at an end, and that therefore he was determined irrevocably to retire from office. Thereby he notified his resignation to His Highness, and he expressed a hope that he would find a Minister, if not so devoted to the country's interest, at least not so "*gemein*," and more courtly and refined, to whom it would not be necessary to send insulting telegrams from abroad. He concluded, threateningly, that the Prince should not play with fire, by irritating Ministers who had almost unlimited command of power, as sooner or later it would cost him his throne.

I make no comment on this letter, or on the events which led up to it, leaving the public to apportion the blame attaching, in general opinion at the time, to both parties.

This letter containing Stambuloff's resignation was handed to the Prince at Belgrade. His Highness arrived at Sofia, with the Princess, on the 26th. On the pretext of illness, Stambuloff did not go, as on previous

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occasions, to the frontier to meet the Royal train, but remained at home, like Achilles, in his tent. The day after his reaching the capital, the Prince wrote to Stambuloff, saying that he had received his letter, and that, as he was ill, he would talk with M. Grékoff. Stambuloff replied that His Highness could do exactly as he pleased, since he was no longer Prime Minister. The Prince, nevertheless, summoned him to the Palace, and from four o'clock till eight they deliberated upon the formation of a new Cabinet. The first idea of the Prince was to entrust its formation to M. Grékoff, who was a favourite with the Stambuloff party, and popular in all circles, but that Minister declined, under the circumstances, to take the cloak that had fallen from the shoulders of his Chief. Stambuloff himself advised a coalition Cabinet, under Stoiloff and Radoslâvoff, but these two could also not agree on the composition of a working Ministry, and a deadlock was the result.

Meanwhile, the news of Stambuloff's resignation had spread all over Bulgaria, and the Prince received hundreds of telegrams, regretting that matters had reached a stage forcing him to part with his Premier, and begging him to reconsider the situation. A very large meeting was held at Sofia, on the 30th May, and after they had passed a resolution, in a similar sense, they adjourned to the Palace, where a Deputation, consisting of all the notables, and headed by M. Blagoeff, the Mayor of Sofia, was to present it to the Prince. His Highness, however, had driven out that morning to a grand military parade, at the camp of Bali Effendi, on the plain, and there he made a speech, saying that he was

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abandoned by all parties, and looked to the Army alone to support him in this crisis.

Meanwhile, a band of about forty cadets from the military school, which has acquired a sorry reputation for always being in the van when there was riot in the air, sallied forth, and commenced picking quarrels with the crowd in front of the Palace. Somebody fired three revolver shots in the air, and a free fight ensued.*

Panic reigned in the Palace, where it was imagined that an attempt was being made to dethrone the Prince. The telephone was set going, and before long the first regiment of cavalry appeared upon the scene with drawn sabres. Had it not been for the personal intervention of Stambuloff, there would probably have been a fight between the soldiers and the police, who were attacked by them in defending the persons and property of the populace. For Captain Morfoff took a squadron of cavalry, formed a rabble-rout of cadets, students, and ragamuffins, and paraded the town, shouting, "Down with Stambuloff!" entering the shops and the cafés, tearing down Stambuloff's portrait, looting, and behaving in the most outrageous manner, whilst their action was covered

* M. Blagoeff, one of the most peaceable of men, together with M. Stoyanoff, head of the Bureau of the National Assembly, was afterwards arrested, and charged with having fired upon the authorities. He was liberated on the enormous (for Bulgaria) bail of 15,000 francs; and no notice was taken of a witness who came forward, threw a revolver down before the Court, and said, "It was not Blagoeff, but I who fired, not upon the authorities, or upon anybody else, but in the air; and here is the revolver with which I fired." The Court did not arrest this man, but continued to try Blagoeff, who, a year afterwards, was still under the charge.

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and defended against the police by the cavalry. Those who resisted were arrested, the different police guard-houses were seized by the troops, and mob-law reigned with the countenance of the army.*

Colonel Petroff had now come in from the camp, and going to the telegraph station, ordered the Divisional Commanders all over Bulgaria to take over charge from the Prefects, and to be responsible for public order. This measure was dictated from the fear of a general rising of the Stambuloffists, and was absolutely necessary.

Amongst other acts of riot, a few vagabonds, on the 30th, tore down the metal *plaques* from the street corners of Stambuloff and Petkoff Streets, and were arrested in consequence. The next day, on the 31st, a mob of about fifteen hundred assembled before the Uchastuk (guard-house) where they were confined, and demanded their release. Stambuloff, who still retained some shreds of his authority in the absence of anybody else, sent a Prefect's Adjutant, named Urdanoff, with twenty mounted police, to disperse them, which he did in less than five minutes. Half an hour later, though, the mob returned, accompanied by half a battalion of infantry.

Urdanoff asked Stambuloff what he was to do. Sick at heart, he replied that against soldiers wearing the uniform the police must do nothing, and the prisoners

* Though Stambuloff had handed in his resignation a week before, nobody had taken his place, and he was still supposed to be Minister up to the 18th/30th May; but after this disturbance, he declined absolutely to take the slightest share of responsibility, and it is generally from this day that the termination of his long and eventful Ministry is dated.

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were to be handed over to them. At the same time he wrote to the Prince, saying that the existing condition of the town was shameful, and entreating him to form some sort of a Ministry; and at nine o'clock, on the 31st, was installed the Stoiloff Cabinet, nominally Conservative, but really relying upon a coalition to support it. It consisted of M. Stoiloff, President and Home Minister; Natchevitch, Foreign Affairs; Gueshoff, Finance; Velitchkoff, Public Instruction; Madjâroff, Public Works, and Posts and Telegraphs; Petroff, War; and Minchievitch, Petroff's brother-in-law, Justice. All of these are already familiar to the reader, except the last. Stoiloff and Natchevitch had repeatedly filled public offices before, and had considerable experience. Gueshoff, Velitchkoff, and Madjâroff are rabid Russophils, having, at various periods of their careers, been implicated in rebellious plots against Bulgaria. And Colonel Petroff we have lately seen in full activity.

On the 3rd June, a mob assembled in front of Stambuloff's house, and he telephoned to the Palace that if they attacked him he should fire upon them, and any bloodshed would be upon the heads of the authorities. A few days later, the Prince addressed a Rescript to Stambuloff, couched in the most glowing terms, thanking him for his long and faithful service, for all the unswerving loyalty and devotion he had shown to his Prince and his country, and assuring him of his sincere appreciation and gratitude. Nothing could have been more flatteringly expressed, and it was handed to him by the Aide-de-Camp, Major Stoyânoff, with a message that His Highness would prefer that no letter of thanks should be

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sent in acknowledgment, but that Stambuloff should come himself to the Palace to see him.

On the 11th June, accordingly, he repaired thither at mid-day. The interview lasted nearly two hours, during which time a crowd was assembling in front of the gates. Both of them could see this from the windows, but neither made any allusion to it, and they parted in the most friendly manner. When he went out, Stambuloff saw a rabble nearly one thousand strong, but composed mostly of youths and street urchins. Stantcheff advised him to slip away by a back door in the garden, but he replied that he would go out by the same door by which he had entered, and no other. Before the very gates was a yelling, seething mass, crying, "Down with Stambuloff! Down with the tyrant! Down with the usurper!" Accompanied only by his faithful Guntcho,* Stambuloff walked coolly forth. Some of the ragged crew spit upon him, others took muddy water in their mouths and squirted it at him, but he smiled contemptuously on his ignoble assailants, and now and again acknowledged some insult by a bow and a sweep of his hat. Opposite the public library a man leaped out with a knife, but in an instant Guntcho had covered him with his revolver, and he fell back. When he finally reached his home he

* Guntcho is a familiar figure to everybody in Bulgaria, for he follows his master like a shadow. He is a short, thick-set fellow, with a dark, full beard. He comes from the village of Medveneh, near Slivno, and was recommended to Stambuloff by his old friend, Zachary Stoyânoff. As long as he was in power, Stambuloff paid him wages, but after he fell, and his property was sequestrated, he dismissed all his servants. Guntcho, however (as, indeed, did almost all of the others), refused to go, and continues to serve for love.

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was mad with rage, and told me that he held the Prince responsible for allowing his guest to be treated so beneath his windows; a treatment which the wildest Albanian would never permit his host to suffer, even if he were his most deadly enemy. It must be doubted, however, if His Highness had anything whatever to do with this demonstration, which seemed to be directed almost as much against him as against Stambuloff. It was certainly got up by the Opposition, and no attempt was made by the authorities or police to stop it, or to punish those who took part in it. The probable truth is that the Government were displeased with the Prince's reception of Stambuloff, and feared a reconciliation. For this reason they wished to intimidate the Prince by sending a mob in front of the Palace. If this was their object—to prevent any further communication between His Highness and his ex-Premier—they succeeded, for this was the last interview, and the farewell of Prince Ferdinand to the man who had done so much for him and his child, and for the country he governed.

From the 12th June to the 9th August, Stambuloff scarcely left the house, but at 3 a.m. on that day he ordered Guntcho to saddle a couple of horses, and started for a ride across country. The police sentinels, who were posted round the house, were so astonished at this early sally, that they did not at first know what to do, and whilst one went to give information, the others followed to try and keep the horses in sight. This they failed in, and, after a six-hours' gallop, Stambuloff returned. In the course of the morning a couple of gendarmes took up their position on his doorstep, but he took no

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notice of them, as they did not interfere with him otherwise. In the evening, Stambuloff's former Under-Secretary of Council came to dinner with his wife. When, at eleven o'clock, they tried to go, the new sentries declared that they had orders not to allow anybody to leave or enter the house between 9 p.m. and 9 a.m. Stambuloff objected that no such order had been communicated to him, and he did not recognise it, and ordered them to make way for his guests. The only reply to this was the presentation of two bayonets, and the ominous click of the locks of their rifles. Nobody knew better than Stambuloff the obstinate and unreasoning obedience of the Bulgarian, and he was forced to retire and telephone to the Police Commissary, saying that he had no room in his house to put up his guests, who were perfectly well known to the Commissary, and were not suspicious personages, and finally orders were given to let them out.*

On the 10th August, Prince Ferdinand arrived from one of his voyages, and Stambuloff immediately wrote to him complaining bitterly of the treatment meted out to the Minister whom, so short a while ago, His Highness had honoured by the Rescript, and concluding his letter by the phrase, "If I have been guilty of any crime, arrest me and try me: but do not put my wife, my mother, my family, and my friends under a general arrest in my own house." This appeal remained without any answer.

* A Hungarian journalist, Ad. Strauss, was in Sofia at the time, and would not believe that Stambuloff's complaint was true, but on trying to force his way in, one evening, he had convincing proof given to him that it was so.

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Consequently, Stambuloff's friends could only come to see him in the day-time. Amongst these may fairly be reckoned most of the Foreign Diplomatic Agents, who, without exception, respected the fallen Minister, and disapproved of the methods of his foes in their triumph. Stambuloff asked them to use their influence with the Prince, for both of their sakes, not to enter upon a course of petty persecution, and Mr. Dering, the British Representative, spoke to Prince Ferdinand on the subject. His Highness carelessly replied, "Ah! I dare say *they* are worrying him a little on account of the manner in which he attacks *them* in his paper; that is all."

On this being repeated to Stambuloff, he grew very angry, declaring that without the support and encouragement of the Prince, the Conservatives neither would nor could have taken the measures against him which they had done; and it was whilst he was in the paroxysm of his rage that M. Kanner, correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, called upon him.

It was on the 14th August that Stambuloff committed the greatest blunder of his life, by pouring out his griefs into the willing ears of M. Kanner. Had he confined himself to a mere recital of what had been done to him, or had he simply put the responsibility for it upon the Government, very little, if any, harm would have come of it. But he attacked Prince Ferdinand violently, and personally, holding him up to contempt by relating various little incidents which he alone knew, and which, for that reason, he ought never to have divulged.

All the bitter words and acts that had passed between them in Bulgaria might one day have been forgiven, but

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this attempt to pillory him in the German Press was an unpardonable sin in the eyes of Prince Ferdinand, and having once crossed the Rubicon of decency, the war was carried on subsequently without the slightest mercy being shown to private, as well as public, acts and relations, and with a total disregard for the usual courtesies of even newspaper controversy.

Up to the time of the publication of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* article, the Prince and his ex-Premier had been enemies, it is true, at heart, but outwardly Stambuloff was still the Prince's trusted counsellor; in fact, the last communication from the Prince, before this incident, had been the issue of his grateful Rescript. The wearing of the mask, and the playing of the farce, had, however, palled upon the impatient spirit of Stambuloff, who felt that he was losing ground in this style of fighting, under a flag of peace, in which the Prince was his superior, as well as occupying the stronger position. Therefore, he declared war openly by a vicious personal attack in the *Zeitung*. The journalist did his work conscientiously, and published, in all its venomous crudity, every word of the interview. The sting of it lay in its truth, and it created a nine days' sensation in Europe. In Bulgaria it was the declaration of hostilities, of which nobody can yet foretell the ending.

Stambuloff, by this outburst, committed what was worse than a crime—a mistake. There can be no real excuse made for it. It may be urged that he was smarting under great provocation, as he doubtless was, but how much worthier and more dignified it would have been to show himself superior to such petty revenge by silence. He

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has often admitted since, that he said what he should never have allowed to pass his lips concerning his Prince, and that it was wrong and unworthy of him, but having once entered the lists, with the dangerous plough-handle of the European Press, he could not turn back. The buttons were off now; it was no longer a fencing match, but a duel to the death.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE PERSECUTION.

Stambuloff summoned to Court—He is bailed out—The attack upon him by the police—Costa Pavloff—Wholesale dismissal of the Stambuloff partisans in Government employ—Maltreatment of electors at Slivno—"*You are drunkards and vagabonds*"—The *Svoboda*—Stoiloff and Petroff make an electoral tour—The "enlightened" Chamber—The method of legislation—The Parliamentary Commission—The sequester—Its illegality—Petkoff and his fortune—The Pension Law—The accusations against Stambuloff—Their absurdity—Stambuloff must not write in red ink—Assassins at tea with the Minister for Foreign Affairs—An execution for taxes on Stambuloff's furniture—His visit to the Club.

ON the 5th September, Stambuloff was summoned to the Court, to answer for defamation of the Prince. He took with him his counsel, M. Pomiânoff, who pleaded that there was no article in the Code by which his client could be held responsible for what a foreign journalist published in a foreign journal. The fact that Stambuloff's paper, the *Svoboda*, had reproduced part of the incriminated "interview" did not alter the case in the least, as, though the *Svoboda* was his organ, he was not legally connected with it, or responsible for its contents. It was, indeed, perfectly impossible to bring the celebrated interview within the pale of Bulgarian law; but, nevertheless, the Court, without troubling itself to hear much argument, simply decided that an offence had been committed; and until judgment could be given,

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the accused must find bail to the extent of 70,000 francs, which was to be paid in gold before he could leave the building, except to go to prison. M. Pomiânoff at once protested against the fixing of such a sum for an offence which did not exist, and the Court then lowered it to 35,000 francs. This sum was collected by Stambuloff from his friends in the crowd, several of whom, guessing what might happen, had brought all the money they possessed with them.

The unexpected production of the bail compelled the Court to release the man whom they already considered their prisoner, and Stambuloff left with his counsel. Outside, he found a crowd of about two hundred and fifty, amongst whom were many Police Commissaries. Conspicuous stood Urukoff, Inspector of the Fifth Uchastuk, and seeing that the mob hesitated, he shouted, "What are you waiting for? Why do you not begin?" and set the example by throwing the first stone. This was the signal for a perfect hail to fall upon the carriage. Poor M. Pomiânoff, who is a small and timid gentleman, kept ducking right and left, but Stambuloff told him to keep still, as there was no good trying to get out of the way of one brick-bat when a dozen others were behind it. As he was making the remark a missile caught the lawyer on the shoulder, and Stambuloff himself felt a sharp numbing pain in the elbow, whilst the horn head of a stick flew off into the carriage.* Had it not been for the presence of mind of Guntcho, who was sitting on the box, the hired ruffians would probably have torn Stambuloff from his seat, and finished with him; but

* I saw this piece of evidence, afterwards, lying on the table.

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when Costa Pavloff and another made at his master with sticks, he drew from his pocket a penknife in a wash-leather case, and holding it as if it were a pistol, made pretence of aiming at Costa's head, whereupon he dealt a furious blow at Stambuloff, and fell back into the crowd. Luckily none of the party were armed, as, on leaving his house to go to the Court, Stambuloff had made sure that he would be arrested, and any arms he might have on his person would be taken away. Consequently he was defenceless, and only dressed very warmly, in anticipation of passing some time in the cells. It was proved afterwards that Costa Pavloff had been with Natchevitch half-an hour previously, and had come straight from him to the scene of action. It should be added that he was shortly after, on his departure for Rustchuk, the recipient of a present of two thousand francs. The only enquiry ever made into this riot was that Guntcho wās brought up for having made his threatening demonstration with a penknife in its case. Nothing was, however, done to him, and Urukoff, who commenced the the stone-throwing, is still at his post at the Fifth Uchastuk.

It is by no means easy to give a coherent account of all that happened during the next four or five months, up to the elections for the new Chamber. The first act of the Stoiloff Cabinet was to make a clean sweep of all the adherents of Stambuloff, throughout the country. He was the accursed thing, and it had to be cut out, root and branch. Fifteen hundred Mayors and Heads of Communes were changed in one month. During his seven years of office, Stambuloff dismissed four out of twenty-four Prefects. Stoiloff dismissed twenty-one im-

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mediately. Out of the eighty-four Baillis, or rural Magistrates and Inspectors, Stambuloff changed twenty during his long tenure. The new Government turned out seventy of them before it had been three weeks in office. As may be imagined, these wholesale dismissals, which went through the whole administrative machine from top to bottom, threw it entirely out of gear. The new men, in order to keep their places, resorted to all sorts of violence, and telegrams from the provinces began pouring in to the Palace from every corner of the Principality, complaining of oppression, robbery, and violence of every description, for which no redress was obtainable. Between the 30th May, 1894, and the same date in the present year, more than fifteen thousand of these have been received, and no answers were ever returned. I must except the case of the electors of Slivno. A dozen Liberals were attacked by the Opposition, or their hired *sopadjis* (so-called from their being armed with *sopas*, or clubs), and mercilessly thrashed. Amongst them were several of the leading merchants, and a Justice of the Peace, who, through a partisan of Radoslâvoff, was also a Liberal. They telegraphed to the Prince, who replied, through his Secretary, Moravenoff: "*The Minister of Interior reports that it is not true that you were beaten: and that you are drunkards and vagabonds who disturbed the peace. This is sent to you as a warning.*" The sufferers, who were being treated in the Government Hospital, were naturally incensed at such an answer, and immediately procured certified copies from the civil authorities of their status in the merchant guilds, together with certificates signed by the Chief Medical Officer of

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the district as to their injuries, and forwarded these side by side with their original telegram and the reply of the Prince to the *Svoboda.*

This newspaper had commenced the publication of petitions and telegrams sent to the Palace under the heading "Anarchy," almost immediately the Stoiloff Cabinet came in. The Government, after a week or two, feeling annoyed at all the outrages perpetrated in its name being daily put on record, decided to shut the office of the paper, under the pretext that it was a Government Press—which it never was, though it had done a great deal of Government work. They opened a case against Krog, the proprietor, and meanwhile sequestrated the machine, which was the best in Sofia, and transported it to the Public Printing House, where it has since been working for the Government. Stambuloff, however, was not to be beaten by this move. He printed the next day at another office, and sent for a new press and type, which came in due course, and with which the paper is now being worked. For more than six months it had several columns daily under the "Anarchy" heading, and the publication is still continuing, but instead of "Anarchy" all complaints are under "The reign of Order and Legality." The virulence and abusiveness with which this paper, under the editorship of M. Petkoff, ex-Mayor of Sofia, has carried on the campaign must be taken as the principal embittering element in the struggle, and if anything has rendered a reconciliation between His Highness and Stambuloff so difficult as to be almost outside the range of possibility, it is the disgraceful personal attacks of the *Svoboda* upon the Prince. No provocation can excuse

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them, and no friend or admirer of Stambuloff can do otherwise than regret that he should countenance them in an organ which he controls. If, however, the *Svoboda* is strong in its language, it usually contains both point and cleverness in its articles, whereas the replies of the *Mir*, the Government newspaper, are simply spiteful.

I do not propose to go into details, or give instances of the wholesale political persecution, which, there is not the shadow of a shade of doubt, prevailed, in spite of the vigorous denials of the Government. Now and again a prominent instance may be quoted, but it may be taken for proved, that no pains were spared to terrorise the country preparatory to and during the September elections. Before these came off, Dr. Stoiloff and Col. Petroff made an electoral tour, and were able, in several places, to judge, *de visu*, of the state of popular feeling. At Chirpan, the two Ministers were forced to fly before a pitched battle, which raged round them, between the Russophil and Liberal factions. At Tirnovo, they were welcomed by their partisans with delight, and on their departure the villa of Stambuloff was set on fire, as a species of *feu de joie*.*

When the elections came off, the whole gendarmerie of the district was collected at Tirnovo, with two companies of troops. M. Todor Todoroff, the present President of the Chamber, supervised operations. The electoral urns were surrounded by gendarmes and clubmen (*sopadjis*), who turned back all the citizens of Tirnovo, who—to a

* Luckily, being built of stone, the stables alone were burnt down before the soldiers, who were encamped close by, came up and put it out.

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man, would have voted for Stambuloff—and put in bulletins themselves in their stead. The voters then held a meeting in the Square, and drew up a protesting telegram for the Prince, but were charged by the gendarmes, and a score of them were more or less damaged. By this free election the Government candidate, Gaikoff, was brought in. At Bielâ Slatina much the same procedure was adopted, only that there artillery was brought up to command the place of voting.

It may be guessed that the elections resulted, as they always do, in favour of the Government, or more correctly speaking, in the exclusion of the Stambuloff Party. For the Government of Coalition had fallen to pieces, and there are not thirty Conservative members in the present Chamber, which is composed of about forty Unionist Russophils from Eastern Roumelia, the same number of Zankoffists, thirty-five Radoslâvists, and the remainder Socialists and Karavéloffists. Out of these, the Radoslâvists are heading the Opposition, such as it is, but as there is no particular Party in real power, and no policy—except to keep down Stambuloff at all costs, a policy in which they are all pretty well agreed—there is not much ground for an Opposition to stand upon. The strength of the Government lies in its weakness. If it were to take up any strong measure, except against the Liberals, it would fall at once. As it is, it governs on sufferance.

This Chamber was opened by the Prince with the usual Throne speech, in which he characterised it as the "most enlightened and intelligent Chamber" he had had the pleasure of addressing. It proceeded forthwith to try and justify these *encomia* by a most phenomenal

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legislative activity. According to the Constitution, no law can be voted until it has been read through article by article, and so considered.

The new Chamber, however, dispensed with these formalities, and was in the habit of holding night sittings, at which comparatively few Deputies were present. It was during these famous "*séances de nuit*" that most of their business was transacted, in a manner which must raise the envy of the slower Houses of Europe. In one night this "enlightened" Chamber voted and passed thirty-two laws, amongst which was a most important one, defining the attributions and privileges of the Exarchate, in no fewer than three hundred articles.

As against Stambuloff and his party, the Chamber at once instituted a Parliamentary Commission, to enquire into the acts of his Ministry. This Commission had no judicial authority vested in it, nor, indeed, could it have.*

Nevertheless, as a commencement of its labours, it drew up a Protocol, putting a sequester upon Stambuloff's property, and forwarded it to Stoiloff, as Home Minister, for communication to the authorities. He, however, being a lawyer, and seeing the invalidity of such a sequester, arbitrarily pronounced by a Commission of simple enquiry, sent it back to them.†

* When Stambuloff tried to leave the country, and applied for his passport, the Commission objected, and M. Stoiloff argued that it had certain judicial powers, though he had distinctly admitted to me, personally, a month or so previously, not only that it had none, but that he had purposely deprived it of a judicial character.

† By Article 75 of the Constitution, nobody shall be punished otherwise than is provided by law, after trial. Confiscation of property is forbidden under any circumstances.

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The fact was that Stoiloff did not approve of the lawless persecution of Stambuloff; but he was, and is, not strong enough to stand in the way of it. The Commission hereupon caused a copy of their protocol, unsigned by Stoiloff, to be sent round to all the Mayors in Bulgaria, forbidding them to issue the certificate of right, without which no transfer of property can be made. Stoiloff looked on at this in silence. The Mayors receiving the Protocol, and being well aware that it was equivalent to an order almost, and at any rate that it expressed the wishes of the Government, refused to deliver the documents, and consequently a sequester was *de facto* put upon Stambuloff's property. An honourable exception to the rest of the Mayors was he of Bourgas, who, on reading the Protocol, remarked that it was unsigned by any competent official of the Ministry, and he should take no notice of it. Accordingly he delivered the titles on demand, and in the Bourgas district Stambuloff was able to sell.

Another Commission was appointed to enquire into the supposed thefts and peculations perpetrated by Stambuloff and his friends. This may be the place to dispel the popular delusion concerning Stambuloff's wealth. When practising as a lawyer, he found many opportunities of acquiring the land of the Turkish peasants, who were leaving *en masse*, and were glad to accept almost any trifle for property which they were forced to leave behind them. Beginning by buying one village, he went on until he became the lord of a manor containing 285 houses, and 150,000 acres of forest. The only use this has ever been to him has been to give

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fifty acres to such of his friends as needed this qualification, in order to sit in the Chamber. Before the elections, the police turned loose the inhabitants of twenty villages into Stambuloff's forests, where they remained for a fortnight cutting down the timber. He never complained of this barbarity. Upon my sympathising with the enormous loss it must have entailed upon him, he laughed, and said that if it amused the people to cut down their ex-Premier's trees, he had no objection, for the transport was too costly for the forests to be valuable at present, and that up to now he had never got one sou's return for the sum of 120,000 francs which this fine estate had cost him. Some day it may be valuable; but until a railway is built it is worth nothing.

To return to the Commission. Their searching having proved fruitless, they proposed a project of a Law to the Chamber, to be entitled "A Law for the prosecution of Government employés who appear to possess more wealth than they ought to." This somewhat original Law was passed without difficulty, and the first and last individual to be examined under it was Petkoff, ex-Mayor of Sofia, and Stambuloff's *alter ego*. Petkoff was generally considered to be a millionaire, and it was simply and solely for his benefit that the law was framed. It is a penal one, and has retro-active force. Any employé may be called upon, in fifteen days, to give in an account of everything he is possessed of. If the Government is not satisfied, it may confiscate his goods and send him to jail. It is directly contrary to Article 75 of the Constitution, already quoted. It was justified on the plea that a similar one exists in Germany. Much to the discomfiture

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of the Government, Petkoff produced his balance-sheet, proving that his whole fortune consisted chiefly in three houses, valued officially at 175,000 francs, and being mortgaged for 115,000, thus leaving him with the gigantic balance of less than £2,500. The result of this *exposé* justified poor Petkoff's character before the Chamber, but by destroying the fiction of his wealth, also destroyed his credit entirely, and was a severe blow to him. No other official has been called up, and it may be assumed that, with all its faults, the Stambuloff Ministry was not corrupt.

A third law was framed to annul the existing Pension Law. By the new one, the whole scale was reduced by about half, in the cases of small pensions drawn by widows and orphans, and even larger proportions in some, whilst the Ministerial pensions were abolished altogether. Heretofore every Minister, if he had only held office for twenty-four hours, received a life pension. This was proposed and carried by Stambuloff (after the pitiful death, from want, of an ex-Minister), who considered it a national disgrace that any man who had ever served his country in so high a capacity should perish for lack of bread.

The Chamber, in one of its "night sittings," abolished the old law, and passed a resolution empowering the Ministry to act upon the project of the new one until it should be finally approved by the Chamber. This was quite illegal, since a Ministry cannot act on a project, and the project itself was full of provisions contrary to the Constitution. The decision of the Chamber was, nevertheless, regarded as sufficient authority for cutting

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down and suppressing the former pensions, and was put into force. The only one of M. Stambuloff's Cabinet who really suffered by this measure was Dr. Stransky, who, with a large family, was almost entirely dependent upon his Ministerial pension, but Radoslâvoff has been reduced also to rely upon his friends. He, who was a Minister himself in this same Cabinet of Stoiloff's, was now forced to collect, from different quarters, the entrance fee to the Liberal Club, and he is naturally now one of the deadliest enemies the Government has to count with.

As soon as Stambuloff heard of the sequester, he at once entered a notarial protest against Stoiloff, holding him responsible for all damages which might accrue, but Stoiloff not having signed the Protocol, could afford to snap his fingers at this—not that he did so; he merely maintained a cheerful silence. Soon afterwards M. Grékoff went to see Prince Ferdinand, and ventured to point out the illegality of the Government proceedings. "What!" exclaimed His Highness, "Stambuloff complaining of illegality after his seven years' rule!" Grékoff respectfully declined to discuss that side of the question, but maintained that the present Government had always made a war-cry out of Law and Order, and the way in which it was beginning to work was producing a very bad impression. Argument was thrown away, however, and M. Grékoff withdrew. He has not been invited to enter the Palace since.

The next moves of the Cabinet were a series of outrageous accusations, brought one after another. In the first instance, nearly a score of notorious prostitutes were brought in a batch to the Court to accuse Stambu-

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loff of having ruined them. In the Court itself these wretched creatures were joking with the public, and relating how they had been fetched by the police out of the brothels to perjure themselves. Needless to say, Stambuloff took no notice of the case, which was tacitly dropped. The next charge fixed upon him was more ridiculous and disgraceful, if possible, than the first. He was actually accused of having murdered Beltcheff himself. With most of the real assassins roaming at large in the streets, their guilt having been proved and confessed by Rizoff, in a pamphlet he wrote in Belgrade, it was too absurd to accuse Stambuloff. Nevertheless, the President of the Court, M. Sofronieff, made out an order to arrest him for the murder of Minister Beltcheff, and sent it to the Chief of Division for execution. This functionary declined to move, though, without an order from the Ministry. "What is the need of that," replied Sofronieff, "since I am acting on their instructions?" The man still refused, however, and the fact of the warrant having been issued became public, and aroused universal indignation. Most of the Foreign Diplomats went to see Stoiloff and Natchevitch, who declared that they had no knowledge of the circumstances, but on the strong remonstrances addressed to them, especially by Mr. Dering and M. de Burian, the Austrian Minister, they consented to quash the proceedings. It was only, therefore, by the kindly intervention of foreigners that Stambuloff was saved from spending his Christmas in prison. The consequences of this would-be blow at him recoiled upon the heads of the strikers, for more than 4,000 telegrams, from every corner of Bulgaria, expressive

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of disgust at this stupid accusation, were received by Stambuloff, and published in the *Svoboda.*

And so opened the year 1895. In January, a Police Inspector appeared at Stambuloff's house, on the pretence of verifying the number of his servants, as he was suspected of harbouring criminals. Stambuloff refused to allow him to enter, basing himself on Article 74 of the Code, which only gives the right of arrest and perquisition on a regularly made-out order from the Tribunal.* The Inspector drew up a Protocol, and served him with a summons, which Stambuloff tore up. A month later, he came again with fifteen gendarmes. Again he was met with a refusal, and an invitation to break in by force if he chose, as he should not enter otherwise. A second Protocol was made, and a second summons sent. The Justice of the Peace, however, sent the summons back to the Inspector to say that Stambuloff was within his rights, and that he could not be prosecuted for upholding them. As a specimen of the minor insults put upon him, I may mention that he applied for a shooting licence, writing his application in red ink. All Stambuloff's friends know well his partiality for red ink, and his habit of writing his letters in that medium. The Mayoralty, however, erased the stamp, and sent back word that if he sent another red application he should be fined! Police sentries were placed permanently round his house to report on everybody who went in and out, and the professional murderers, Naoum Teufectchieff,

* It was said at the time, I remember, that he had arrested Panitza, and made perquisitions right and left without any judicial order. No sane man can, however, compare the two cases.

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Costa Giurgiukly, and Velikoff, were lodged in the villa of the brothers Ivânoff, over against his windows. The former of these is in the habit of daily visiting Natchevitch, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Sofia is treated to the somewhat unusual spectacle of a convicted assassin, condemned already to fifteen years' penal servitude, by the Turkish Tribunals, for the murder of Dr. Vulkovitch, and under a charge of murdering Beltcheff, having been released on a bail of five thousand francs, going every evening for coffee and cigarettes with the Foreign Minister. M. Natchevitch says that he receives him as one of the leaders of the Macedonians; but Stambuloff maintains that he is being kept simply to murder him. This view is certainly supported by the fact that when he goes out, he is quickly followed by one or other of these men, and that the *Svoboda* has over and over again openly accused Natchevitch of being in league with this knot of professional cut-throats to kill Stambuloff, and challenged him to prosecute it, so that it may prove the conspiracy before the Tribunals. Yet no summons has ever been sent.

There is no doubt that the persecution of Stambuloff is now caused principally by the attacks of the Press, notably, the *Svoboda*, on the Government. Before the elections of September, 1894, this paper stood alone against the Ministry. After the break-up of the Coalition, however, more than fifty out of the sixty journals which Bulgaria boasts, took up the attack. Most of them vituperate the Prince and Stambuloff together, with impartiality, and it sometimes actually happens that the *Svoboda* has to defend the Prince against the Zankoffist

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assaults. If Stambuloff were to cease the publication of the *Svoboda*, he would probably be left in peace; but it is the only paper which is purely anti-Russian.

The other papers fall upon the Government and the Prince, but leave Russia alone. The *Svoboda* is the only defender of the national interests, and the only fighter against Russian influence. The Radoslâvists are also dead against Russia, and are almost as much hated by the Government as the Stambuloff Liberals. Five-sixths of Northern Bulgaria is consequently virtually outlawed, and the violence used at the supplementary elections of the 3rd February, culminating in several deaths, and the indictment for conspiracy of the victims who were left alive, showed that small mercy or shrift would be given by the Government to its adversaries.

It would be easy to multiply cases of petty tyranny, practised upon Stambuloff and his adherents, almost *ad infinitum*, but it would only weary the reader. I will confine myself, therefore, to relating what occurred during my last visit to Sofia, during the month of May.

One day I found Stambuloff somewhat excited and very angry, and he informed me that the Government had abolished the Caisse d'Epargne, and refused to refund him the money he had deposited there. This Caisse was founded by Stambuloff in the Foreign Ministry, to encourage the employés to save. They paid in a percentage of their salaries, and drew ten per cent. interest. For some reason or other, the present Government had decreed its abolition. Stambuloff had 18,000 francs there, and as all his property was under sequester, he was badly in want of money. On applying for it,

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he was told he could wait. Whilst I was talking with him, the tax-collectors called for 1,500 francs taxes. Stambuloff said he had not 500 in the house; but if they would wait for a few days, he would pay them. They went away, saying that if they were not satisfied when they next appeared, they should seize the furniture. In a short while they came again, and wished to put their threat into execution. They were only prevented from doing so by Stambuloff's sending out and borrowing the money.*

On my arrival, Stambuloff, who had scarcely ventured outside his doors for weeks, because he dared not walk alone, and his friends were afraid to go with him, proposed to me to have a day's snipe-shooting, as we so often had done in former times. We arranged for Saturday; but when the time came he said that he scarcely felt well enough, but should we go round to the Club? We started with Guntcho in attendance, followed by the sentries, and felt that we were positively under preventive arrest.

Since then I hear that Stambuloff visited the Club again one evening, and this time the three assassins accompanied his party, and ensconced themselves in wait outside. Seeing this, he collected all the friends he could in the building, and effected a re-entry to his house in

* I called upon Dr. Stoiloff, and remonstrated with him on these outrageous proceedings, by which Stambuloff was placed outside the pale of the law as regards his privileges, and under it as regards his liabilities. M. Stoiloff answered me as usual, that he knew nothing about the taxes; but that as regards the money, Stambuloff would be paid in his due turn, in the order in which his application had been received.

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superior force. It has, however, taken away all desire to repeat his visit.

Before quitting Sofia, I urged upon Stambuloff the advisability of taking a change of air and scene, and giving party animosity time to cool. He replied that he should like nothing better; but he did not think he would be permitted to leave. I then suggested that he should procure a medical certificate to the effect that his life was in danger, unless he could profit by the waters (he has the first symptoms of diabetes), and upon this that he should demand his passport. M. Stoiloff, to whom I spoke on the subject, promised me that he would offer no opposition, and the support of several of the Foreign Representatives to the request could be confidently relied upon. Stambuloff complied with my programme, but was refused, on the ground that the Parliamentary Commission objected to his departure. As this Commission was instituted "to search the Archives, and draw up a report for the Chamber," it is difficult to see what right it had to interfere. It is also tolerably certain that Stoiloff himself, if left to himself, would have granted the permission, and therefore the refusal must be put down to "superior orders." It is most regrettable, as it still further envenoms Stambuloff against the Prince, and protracts hostilities, when a truce might have been declared. At the present moment, the two foes are preparing for another round; and it would be a bold prophet who should venture a prediction on the issue.

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CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Stambuloff's views—His nephew Kiriloff expelled from the Army—A schoolmaster beaten and set to sweep out the police-station—The Government always says it does not know—"When I was Premier a bee could not start from Varna without my knowing it"—The Prince and Russia—A dangerous game—Dr. Stoiloff's opinion—He does not believe in the stories of persecution—Is confident about the elections—Character of Stambuloff—He was his own worst enemy.

POSTSCRIPT.—The premeditation of the murder—The Government morally responsible—The assassination—Guntcho is arrested—The police look on—Stambuloff's hands amputated—His death—The accusation of the *Svoboda* against the Government—Stambuloff's last letter.

I HAVE endeavoured, in the preceding pages, to present a faithful picture of the events of the last few years by recording the facts, as they occurred, without further comment than necessary to make their bearing on the story clear. In order that the public may, however, hear Stambuloff's own version, I will reproduce, from notes, his account of the situation, and add to it the defence of the Government, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Stambuloff *loquitur*.—"The Stoiloff Government, on its accession to power, issued a circular, in which it promised to adhere to the Constitution and the Law, to reduce the Army and Taxation, and to effect a reconciliation with Russia. The great reproach brought against me has

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always been that I used my power unconstitutionally and arbitrarily. I admit this fully. I used publicly to say in the Chamber, that I intended to proceed to some necessary measure, not provided for by the Constitution, but justified by the circumstances of the case. But all my arbitrary acts were performed for the good of the country, and generally in the face of some great national danger. The Stoiloff Cabinet, however, violates the Constitution every day, and tramples upon all the legal rights of its political enemies. It has taken eight millions off the *dimes*, but it has added eighteen by the accise; and as for the reconciliation with Russia, it has not yet been accomplished. They have proclaimed an amnesty for political criminals, but none for those who hunted down the traitors. The Liberals are, in fact, being prosecuted by the very men they brought to justice. This would be comprehensible if the Prince and I had been turned out by the Russians, but I can find no plausible excuse for it now.

"The interior and exterior policy of the Government has weakened it in the eyes of the nation, and of Europe, and if Russophilism has come to life again, it is only thanks to a few traitors. It is with a bleeding heart that I see the Russian propaganda carried on by Bulgarian officials, and no word spoken from the Palace to stem a current which will one day sweep away Prince Ferdinand. If the persecution were limited to civilians it would be bad enough, but it has spread to the Army. Since my fall, three hundred of our best and most patriotic officers have been put on the retired list. My relative, Lieutenant Kiriloff, paid me two visits, and for this he was expelled the Army, and has gone to Geneva to study law. Colonel Kutintcheff, one of my best friends from childhood, used occasionally to come and see me. He was quickly transferred to Slivno, and when he returned to Sofia, on fifteen days' leave, to fetch his wife, and paid me a visit, he was at once bidden to quit the capital in twenty-four hours. The reason given to him was, that he had been seen "at Stambuloff's house." A special set was made against school teachers. The masters, seeing themselves dis-

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missed wholesale, began forming societies for self-protection, and this was construed into political conspiracy. Last Easter, at Dubnitza, the teacher, Dimitri Leshkinoff, criticised some act of the Government. The Bailli came at eleven o'clock at night, and took him to the guard-house. Here is the account of his sufferings, published in the *Svoboda*, signed by himself and several witnesses. He was thrashed till his back was as soft as his stomach, as we say in Bulgarian, and those who saw his condition afterwards said that "flies crawled up the small of their backs" when they looked at him. On the Sunday he was compelled to sweep out the guard-house, and clean the latrines. He sent his complaint to the Palace, but no notice was taken of it. The Government simply says it has no knowledge of these barbarities, and therefore they must be invented by us. When I was Premier, a bee could not start from Varna without my knowing it!

"As for my campaign in the *Svoboda*, it may be wrong, but it is the only weapon I have left to me. Through it I have raised public opinion, not only in Bulgaria, but all over Europe. It is the way in which the European journals spoke of me which damaged me most of all in the eyes of the Prince, who hates to hear the world talking more about me than about him. Some French sheet described him as '*grelottant dans l'ombre de son Premier*,' and there appeared the pamphlet called the *Zaun-König*—the fable of the eagle who soared higher than all other birds, but when he could rise no more, a wren fluttered off his back and flew a few yards higher still.

"By his declaration that Bulgaria cannot exist without Russia, by his open court paid to Russia, in order to obtain a reconciliation at all risks, and by his resuscitation of the Russian ghost, the Prince has forfeited the confidence of Bulgaria and of Europe. Unless he changes his present hermaphrodite exterior policy, and compels his Government to cease making persecution their ruling principle, I would not give a sou for his throne. He is simply playing into the hands of Russia. I believe he knows this danger, and counts upon the Army to support him. Unfortunately, our officers are all

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politicians, and have tasted the forbidden fruit. There are also close and indissoluble ties, which the Prince does not take sufficiently into account, between the Army and the Nation. The possibilities of a civil war are, however, so horrible to me, that I prefer to carry this subject no further.

"In my opinion, the existence of Bulgaria, apart from Prince Ferdinand, depends very largely—too largely at present—upon her external policy, especially upon her relations with Turkey and Roumania. It was always my aim to inspire confidence in these two, but the action of the present Government is not calculated to do so. Any disturbance here would quickly spread throughout the Balkans, and we are sitting upon a volcano just at present. In the same way, anything going wrong in Turkey echoes through the Peninsula, and the greatest caution ought to be exercised by all of us to prevent any breach of the peace. I am certain that if ever Russia occupied Varna and Bourgas, Austria would cross the Save and take Belgrade. The interests of all the Balkan States, and of Turkey, are identical, and this was always the very backbone of my policy."

Dr. Stoiloff *loquitur*.—"Stambuloff complains bitterly of what he is pleased to term persecution, but I deny *in toto* that we are persecuting. He ought to think himself lucky to get off so easily. What has been done to him, after all? A Commission has been instituted to enquire into his acts. If it finds that he has committed crimes, he will have to answer for them. That is not persecution. As for the sequester on his property, I do not approve of it myself, and refused to sign the protocol of the Commission recommending it. But it is not such a very terrible weapon to use. All the lesser miseries he wails over, I know nothing about. As for the telegrams and letters in the *Svoboda*, I cannot treat them as evidence. I do not believe that there is the slightest foundation for nine-tenths of them; and as for the rest, well, the victims probably brought their woes on themselves. Stambuloff pretends that the whole country is against us, and that we are ruling by terrorism. I have

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travelled all over Bulgaria lately, and saw none of the horrors he describes in his *Svoboda*, and had no complaints made to me, as I should have had if they were true. If these things happen, I can only repeat they are not within my cognisance. As for the conspirators, brigands, and assassins who, you say, are 'strolling about and smoking with M. Natchevitch,' there has been a political amnesty, and anybody who likes can come to Sofia. In the particular case of Naoum Teufectchieff, there is a question as to whether he is a Turkish or a Bulgarian subject. Until that is settled we cannot hand him over to the Ottoman Government, or try him ourselves. Therefore he is at liberty on bail.

"I quite agree with the Prince that our only chance of salvation is a reconciliation with Russia, and I have hopes of achieving it. Our present situation is that of the leper of Europe, and is quite intolerable.

"As for our prospects in the coming elections, I am quite tranquil about them. We shall have a good majority, for the whole of Bulgaria is sick to death of the Liberals, and the disgraceful way in which they are behaving, especially in their paper, the *Svoboda*.

"All that is respectable in the country is on our side, and we are resolved firmly not to let ourselves be frightened out of our path. The Prince is daily gaining ground both here and in Europe, and we can afford to listen with indifference to the yelping of the Liberal pack."

Which of the two is right, time will show. Their views and statements are so diametrically opposite, that there is no fitting them together. Since I left Sofia, the Bulgarian Government has presented a note to the Porte respecting certain indemnities, and reiterating a request for the execution of the Iradé giving two more Bulgarian Bishops to Macedonia. This note was very badly received, and M. Dimitroff, the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agent, left Constantinople next day. Simultaneously with this

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diplomatic quarrel, disturbances began in Macedonia, and at the date of my writing these lines,* it looks as if the outbreak of hostilities between the Turkish troops and the peasant population of Macedonia were about to open up a question similar to the Armenian one.

In judging Stambuloff's life, the Western critic must take into consideration the surroundings amongst which he was bred and lived. If he ruled roughly, it was a rough people he had to deal with. He was a young man, in almost absolute power over a young nation. At the age when most of our youths are wielding the oar and the cricket bat, he was a leader in the forlorn struggle of Bulgaria against Turkey. Taught in the hard school of want and adversity, his nature was rugged as the mountains which were his youthful home and refuge. He was blamed, when in power, for behaving with unnecessary rigour towards his opponents, but politics in Bulgaria are not what they are in Western Europe. Political passions are so fierce, that every party looks upon the other as an actual physical foe, to be dealt with in a manner to cripple and disable it for ever. In Stambuloff, we see the strong man defending his house. Amidst plots and conspiracies, surrounded by uncertain friends and open enemies, he was often obliged to strike swiftly. And when he struck, his hand was undoubtedly heavy. The best justification of his policy is to be found in the fact that his adversaries, who came in upon a condemnation of it, are following it as closely as they can.

Since he fell, he has been reproached with his campaign against the Prince. There can scarcely be two opinions

* 30th June, 1895.

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on this subject, but the greatest sufferer has not been Prince Ferdinand. As a keen and competent observer, one who most strongly disapproved of Stambuloff's later acts, remarked to me—

"*Son œuvre fut si colossale que personne autre que lui-même pourrait la détruire. Eh! bien, il le fait avec ses propres mains.*"

When he quitted the Presidential chair, Stambuloff could proudly remember how he had consolidated the Union; held the country single-handed against the kidnappers of Prince Alexander; ruled it as Regent in the teeth of Russia; driven out the Russian Commissioners and Consuls; brought in a new Prince, and kept him on the throne through a series of plots and dangers from within and without; reconciled the Church and State, and drawn close the ties between Bulgaria and her Suzerain, the Sultan.

All Europe recognised his magnificent services, and he stood on a pedestal so high that none of his adversaries could reach his feet. By his desperate thirst for revenge, though, he came down from his high place, and put himself, if not on a level, at least within reach of his foes. His best friends besought him to suffer in silence, and to show himself as strong in patience as he had been in power. But Stambuloff could not endure, and he did for himself what his worst enemies could not have done for him. And they, watching with secret pleasure how, with his own hands, he was tearing off his armour, kept goading him on with little pricks in his captivity, and refusing, like modern Pharaohs, to let him go. What is now taking place in Sofia is a melancholy and degrading

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spectacle. It is a sordid smirch on one of the fairest pages a man could ever show for his life, and a blot of black ingratitude on the history of Bulgaria.

June 30th, 1895.

POSTSCRIPT

The ink was scarcely dry upon the proofs of the preceding pages when the civilised world was shocked by the news of the assassination of Stambuloff. It may be doubted if any crime of modern times, not even excepting the outrage on the Czar Alexander II., raised such an universal feeling of horror, loathing, and contempt for its authors. In the one case the assassins were a few desperate, hunted Nihilists, tracked by the police like wolves, hiding in caves and cellars, and working under a fanatical creed which converted them for the time being into temporary madmen. In the other we see hired 'bravos' whose character was well known to the authorities, whose hands were steeped in blood of former victims, and who openly boasted that they were kept to kill Stambuloff. A man, sick to death, begged for leave to quit the town where he could not take a step without being followed by those who were sworn and paid to make an end to him, and it was refused. The Foreign Diplomatic Agents repeatedly pointed out to the Government that if anything happened to Stambuloff, the whole responsibility would fall upon them. This responsibility they deliberately undertook. By the refusal to grant Stambuloff his passport, they signed Stambuloff's death-warrant as surely as if they had led him out to execution. They knew it, he knew it, and every man, woman, and child in Sofia knew it. The question was simply one of time. He might die of his

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disease, or the murderers might find a favourable opportunity. What hurried the catastrophe may or may not be known some day, but it will probably turn out that a notorious Russophil leader, then on a visit to Petersburg, had been told by the Russophil Bulgarians there, and the Slav Committees, that so long as Stambuloff lived there was no hope of a reconciliation with Russia. Hereupon a message may have been sent to Sofia, that what had to be done were best done quickly. The day before the murder the 'Mir,' the Government organ, published an article saying that the only thing to do with Stambuloff was to "tear his flesh from his bones." The order was too literally fulfilled. There was, indeed, no chance of escape from his fate. It was well known that the refusal to grant the passport was sanctioned by the Prince, under pretext that His Highness did not wish Stambuloff to be touring about Europe, talking against him. It was, however, interpreted far differently in Bulgaria. There everybody knew that a band of professional cut-throats were being kept for no other purpose than to clear off the great impediment in the way of the Russophils. They knew, too, that the death of Stambuloff was the best means of pleasing the Prince and the Government, and under such circumstances the task was an easy one for the conspirators to carry out. As, latterly, the only exercise Stambuloff ever took was between his home and the Union Club, down the Rakovsky Street, it was certain that the murder would take place there. He has often remarked to me, himself, that he would be killed in those three or four hundred yards, and events have shown that his presentiment was only too true. It happened in this wise:

On the 15th of July, at ten minutes to eight in the

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evening, Stambuloff and Petkoff left the Union Club, where they had been spending an hour or two. A carriage had been waiting at the corner ever since their arrival, and the coachman, who was not one of those usually stationed at this spot, said that he had come to take them home. The trusty Guntcho mounted the box, and they drove off. As they passed the house of Guzeleff, three men sprang out into the roadway. The foremost was armed with a revolver, the other two with the formidable knives called 'yatagans.' Stambuloff and Petkoff leaped down on the opposite side, and the driver instantly whipped up his horses and disappeared, but not before Guntcho had also managed to descend, both he and Petkoff being thrown violently to the ground in doing so. Stambuloff had hardly gone six paces before his assailants were upon him, three to one. Probably from not wishing to raise an unnecessary alarm, the revolver was not used. As Stambuloff was feeling for his own pistol, he received a slash across the wrist which nearly severed his right hand. He then raised both arms to protect his head from the savage cuts aimed at it. His right arm was broken in several places, and the flesh and muscle ripped to the bone. He soon fell, and on the road the assassins continued hacking at his defenceless form until Guntcho had picked himself up, and rushed to the rescue. Firing a shot from his revolver, he put the three to flight, and started in pursuit, when Captain Morfoff, the same who had led the rabble on the 30th May, with three gendarmes who were present on the scene, immediately arrested Guntcho, and gave the murderers time to escape. The one wounded by Guntcho, for he seems to have hit his mark, ran down

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Mutkûroff Street and Krakra Street. As he was bleeding from the face, a hue and cry was raised, and he was followed past the British Agency, where the two sentinels declined to respond to the shout of the pursuers to arrest him, although he passed within ten paces of them. Once beyond the Agency, he was in open country, and soon gained the slopes of Mount Vitosh. As soon as Petkoff recovered from his heavy fall he went for assistance, the mutilated body of Stambuloff was carried to his house, and he was laid upon a table in the front room. His wife was out at the time, and when she returned, the sight which met her was indeed a terrible one. Both of her husband's hands and arms were sliced to ribbons, one eye was nearly cut out, and fifteen gaping wounds criss-crossed his forehead and temples. Doctors Sterlin and Hakânoff were quickly in attendance, and decided that an immediate amputation of both limbs was necessary, and it was at once performed. His constitution was already enfeebled by disease, and by a course of waters; and the great loss of blood, first from the wounds, and then from the surgeon's knife, left little chance of recovery. Nevertheless, the day passed without any alarming symptoms, and it was only on the night of the 17th that high fever set in, and the mind, which had been clear hitherto, began to wander. At twenty-five minutes past three a.m., on the eighteenth, Stambuloff died, surrounded by his family and friends, and mourned by half the world.

It is not worth while to detail the first steps taken towards discovering the murderers, as this volume will probably appear in print long before the trial is commenced, if proper trial there ever be. There is some possibility of a

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wretched scapegoat being found, but the really guilty parties, the accomplices before and after the fact, will never be brought to the bar.

The next day the 'Svoboda' published the following:

"Who are the murderers of Stambuloff? Who took the life of such a man as Bulgaria will never see again?

"Who lifted the yatagan against him? They are officially unknown, but all Bulgaria knows them. For the last seven months we have repeatedly and openly declared that the Government was keeping the assassins of Beltcheff and Vulkovitch to murder Stambuloff. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Natchevitch, has given some of these men posts under Government, and daily receives them in his house.

"Who has now killed Stambuloff?

"Whoever struck the blow, the moral murderers are the Prince and his Government who refused to let him leave Sofia, and so gave an opportunity to their assassins. The blood of Bulgaria's finest patriot cries aloud for vengeance. Two days ago the official journal, the 'Mir,' called upon its friends to tear the flesh from the bones of Stambuloff and Petkoff. Its orders have been executed.

"Rejoice therefore, ye who are a disgrace to Bulgaria, criminals under an official cloak! You have cut off the right hand which so often saved Bulgaria and the Prince's crown. Be merry! for you have removed the barrier which prevented you from selling your country.

"But will you ever know peace again? Never, a thousand times over, never!

"Wherever you are, in your goings out and your comings in, the blood of Stambuloff will be with you; in your homes, amongst your families, in church and in office, the shadow of Stambuloff will follow you, and will leave you in this world nevermore."

The accusation here brought is no new one. The 'Svoboda' has printed similar challenges over and over

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again, defying the Government to prosecute it, and so give it a chance of proving its words in a Court of Law.

With Stambuloff disappears the only real adversary capable of holding the country against the Russophils. The most prominent member of the Nationalist Party left is Radoslâvoff, who may make an effort, together with Petkoff, and possibly some of the Army, to rally and effect a stand against Russia. It is, however, a thankless task to prophesy about Bulgaria. Further than this, I prefer not to look into the dark and stormy future which opens beyond Stambuloff's grave.

I could not more fittingly conclude this study than by translating the last letter I received from Stambuloff, only a few days before his right hand was cut off. It is probably the last private one he ever wrote and signed, and I give it almost in full. The reader will notice that amidst all his personal worries, his mental struggles, and physical sufferings, his one predominant idea, the single love of his life, was Bulgaria. For Bulgaria he lived, and for her he died a martyr-patriot.

Here is his letter:

"*Sofia, 8th July, 1895.*

"*My Dear Friend,*

"*As you know, the Deputation, with the Metropolitan Clement at its head, has reached Petersburg to place a wreath on the grave of the Emperor Alexander III., and, at the same time, to propose conditions for the perdition of Bulgaria. The Prince is delighted that the Deputation has been received, and believes that through it he will obtain his recognition. He is ready to make any concessions, if only the Czar will consent to recognise him. And so the independence and freedom of our poor fatherland finds itself in deadly peril, through the wretched Russophilism of our Government.*

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"I never thought we should descend to such depths. But what can we do when they 'salt the salt'? The nation is not guilty in the slightest of this base truckling; its leaders alone are responsible. From Macedonia we have little news yet, although several bands of from 10 to 15 men have crossed the frontier. Here in Sofia a large band of about 400 is being organised, but is not yet ready to start.

"Please let me know what people are saying and thinking in Constantinople. Surely it cannot be possible that the Great Powers will permit our Government to sell Bulgaria to the Russians? And supposing that Russia were to recognise the Prince, would Turkey do so too? And how about Austria and the Triple Alliance?

"The Prince is now entirely under the influence of his Russophil Ministers—Velitchkoff, Madjâroff, and Gueshoff. Before long he means to get rid of Stoiloff, Petroff, and Natchevitch. Yesterday His Highness returned from Varna, bringing with him Stantcheff, our newly-named Minister to Bucharest. He wishes to appoint him Minister of Foreign Affairs. It only wanted this Court lacquey in office to complete the picture! Yours sincerely,

(Signed) "S. Stamboloff."

Perchance these words—this voice from the dead, appealing to Europe to save Bulgaria from the dragon's jaws—may find additional force from the fact that the hand that penned them was lopped from the arm which had held the lists so long, by the assassin's knife, and that the true patriot's heart which dictated them shed all its rich blood in the Cause on behalf of which they speak. Perhaps dead Stambuloff may yet strike one more blow for the Bulgaria he loved so well.

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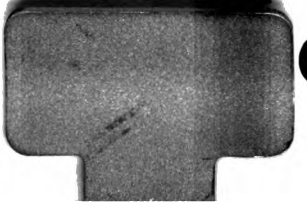

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